



# AVAA AMPLIFIER

**Newsletter of the Association of VA Audiologists**

Winter 2026

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK: *Melissa Pereira, Au.D.*

AVAA President

Dear Colleagues,

As we move through the year, I want to recognize a quality that defines our profession. Resilience.

Audiology requires expertise, compassion, adaptability, and a commitment to meeting people where they are. Each day, you manage clinical complexity, integrate evolving technology, and carry the responsibility of improving communication and connection for those you serve. You continue to show up with professionalism, creativity, and dedication regardless of shifting demands across our workplaces. I sincerely appreciate everything you contribute to patient care and to this profession.

Resilience means more than navigating challenges. It reflects how we support one another, share knowledge, and strengthen our professional community. I take pride in the collaboration, innovation, and leadership I see across this group, and I remain grateful to work alongside professionals who consistently elevate the field.

In alignment with AVAA's mission to advance and support audiology, we continue to drive initiatives that reflect both service and stewardship. Several of our practitioners have committed to presenting complimentary educational webinars through AudiologyOnline, with sessions scheduled from April through December of this year. Through these presentations, they will showcase AVAA's expertise while contributing meaningful knowledge to the broader audiology community.

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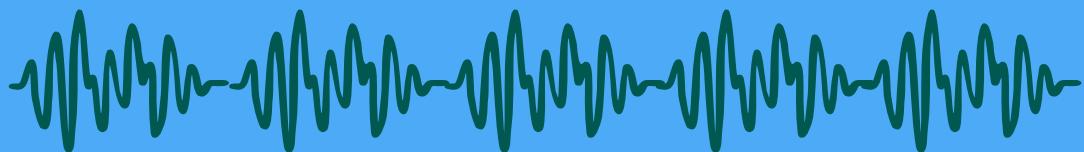
## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK: *Continued*

We actively engage in national audiology consortium discussions to ensure our collective perspective shapes ongoing professional dialogue. At the same time, we are evaluating the feasibility of developing an externship portal on our website to strengthen pathways for students and future audiologists entering the field.

These efforts demonstrate our commitment to supporting current practitioners while shaping a strong and sustainable future for audiology.

As we move forward, I encourage you to continue lifting one another up, sharing expertise, and recognizing the impact your work creates each day. Serving alongside professionals who care deeply about their patients and their profession remains both motivating and rewarding.

*P.S. I look forward to seeing many of you at JDVAC. Until then, may your tymps stay clear, your batteries stay charged, and your conference experience feel positively magical.*



### DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE AVAA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE!

**Pay your 2026 AVAA Membership Dues now and be entered to win PRIZES!**

**AVAA Member dues go toward:**

- Promoting the needs of audiologists within the VA system
- Building relationships with other local and national professional organizations to represent VA audiologists
- Helping disseminate important information to VA audiologists
- Supporting our great annual conference, JDVAC

**AVAA  
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Visit [myAVAA.org](https://myAVAA.org) to pay  
your member dues!**

*All membership dues paid by 5PM on EST of  
March 11, 2026 will be entered to win:*

**\*1 year AudiologyOnline membership**

# AVAA Announcements (Continued)



*Don't forget to follow AVAA  
on your  
favorite social media  
platforms!*

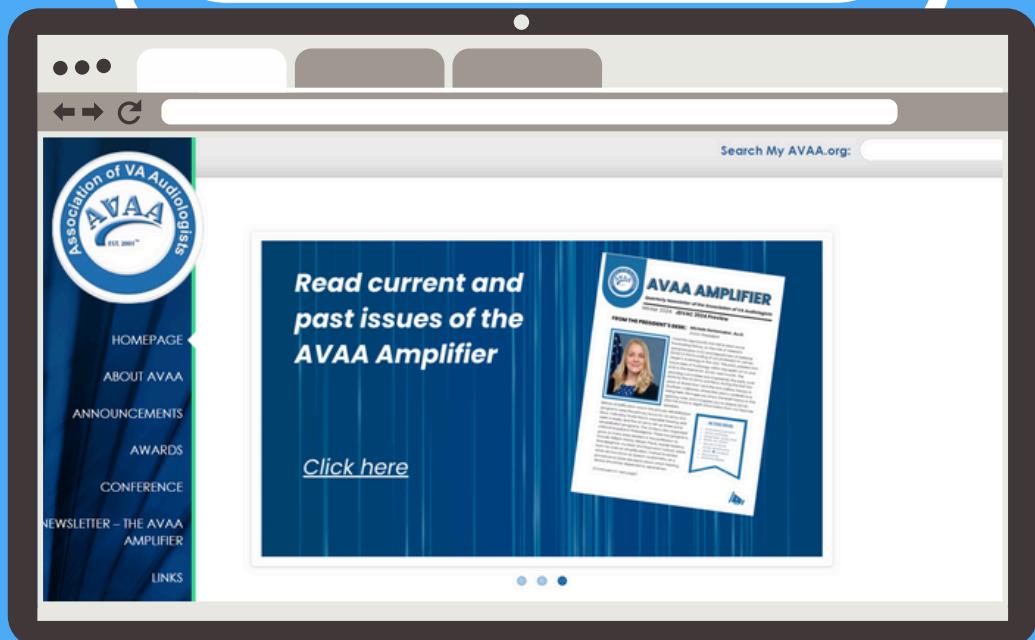


## DID YOU KNOW?

*The AVAA Website is a great source of information about all happenings and events that AVAA is involved with!*

*You can even find board member direct e-mail addresses on our site!*

***In addition, it is a “ONE-STOP SHOP” for all universities and future externs to see current VA externship offerings!***



# JDVAC 2026



ATTENTION VA AUDIOLOGISTS,  
WIZARDS, WITCHES & MUGGLES:

YOU ARE FORMALLY INVITED TO  
JOIN US ON  
MARCH 9TH-11TH

DOUBLE TREE BY HILTON AT THE  
ENTRANCE OF UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Click on the  
JDVAC  
2026 logo to  
register!



# JDVAC 2026

(CONTINUED)

LOOKING TO LEARN SOME NEW AUDIOLOGY "SPELLS"?  
IS YOUR CLINIC LOOKING FOR NEW POTIONS AND WANDS?  
YOU'LL FIND ALL YOUR MAGICAL NEEDS & MORE AT  
JDVAC 2026.

WE HAVE SOME BEWITCHING PRESENTATIONS THAT ARE BOUND  
TO GIVE YOU SOME NEW AUDIOLOGY KNOWLEDGE!

OUR EXHIBIT HALL WILL BE FILLED WITH WIZARDS AND  
WARLOCKS WHO WILL AMAZE YOU WITH THEIR TIPS AND TRICKS  
FOR WORKING WITH ENCHANTING DEVICES AND NEW CLINICAL  
EQUIPMENT. CHECK THEM OUT AND FIND THE MAGIC THAT  
OUR EXHIBITORS CAN OFFER TO HELP IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO  
DELIVER GREAT AUDIOLOGY CARE!

AND LET US NOT FORGET OUR ANNUAL MONDAY NIGHT  
SOCIAL! THIS YEAR'S THEME IS "MAGIC AFTER DARK".  
JOIN IN THE FUN AND DRESS IN YOUR MAGICAL ATTIRE!

WE SOLEMNLY SWEAR JDVAC 2026 IS BOUND TO BE  
GOOD!



# Whole Health Corner

Balancing work, life and self care can be a challenge! Below is a quick breathing exercise from [blog.zencare.co](http://blog.zencare.co), referred to as 4 part or "square" breathing. It can be done anywhere and can help when you are having trouble sleeping, reduce stress at work, or reset your focus when having trouble making a big decision.

## Technique Overview

- Inhalation: Breathe in deeply for a count of four.
- Retention : Hold the breath for a count of four.
- Exhalation: : Exhale slowly for a count of four.
- Retention: Hold the breath again for a count of four.

If it helps you can visualize each step as the side of a square





# Setting the Stage: Upcoming Externship Interviews



**Is your site going to be taking externs in 2027-2028? Need some inspiration for questions for the interview? We have gathered some sample extern interview questions from your fellow audiologists across the country! Thanks to all who contributed these great questions!**

- Can you share an example of a patient experience that you consider one of your most successful, as well as a situation where you wish you had approached things differently? What insights did you gain from each experience, and how have those lessons influenced your approach to patient care today?
- Please share your proudest achievement. What were the challenges you faced to get there?
- Why are you interested in an externship within the VA Health Care System?
- Give case studies (or case history) for student to go through start to finish.
- Tell us about your path to Audiology, what drew you to this field?
- Describe a situation where you had to multitask under time pressure?
- What are some recent advancements or technologies in audiology that excite you?
- If you suspect that a patient is malingering how would you verify that and what are the next steps you would take?
- Your patient shows up 25 minutes late for their hearing evaluation and they are new to the clinic, your next patient check-ins at the same time. Walk us through the steps you would take in staying on time and getting the results you need.
- What do you hope to gain from this externship year?
- How would you counsel a patient who is reluctant to try hearing aids or who has unrealistic expectations?
- How would you handle a situation where you have a gap in knowledge about a test or piece of equipment during an appointment with a patient?
- What are some of the benefits/challenges you in working on a team with different generations of Audiologists?
- You finished with patient care early or had a patient cancel/no show. What do you do next?

# Progressive Tinnitus Management

## 2.0

**As part of AVAA's ongoing commitment to clinical excellence, professional collaboration, and Veteran-centered care, we are highlighting updated tools and programs that support Audiologists and interdisciplinary teams across the VA. One such resource is Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) 2.0.**



### **Living better with tinnitus—one skill at a time**

Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) 2.0 is the VA's updated, evidence-based approach to helping Veterans understand and manage tinnitus in practical, meaningful ways. Using the refreshed Progressive Tinnitus Management 2.0 Workbook, PTM 2.0 emphasizes education, coping skills, and self-management strategies that Veterans can apply in everyday life.

Rather than trying to "make tinnitus go away," PTM 2.0 supports Veterans by helping them:

- Understand what tinnitus is (and what it isn't)
- Learn simple sound and relaxation strategies
- Reduce stress and improve sleep
- Build confidence in managing symptoms over time

The updated workbook features clearer language, engaging exercises, and real-world examples that make it easier for Veterans to follow along at their own pace—whether they are new to tinnitus care or refining skills they already use.

Through programs like PTM 2.0, VA Audiologists continue to lead innovation in tinnitus care, ensuring Veterans receive consistent, evidence-based support across clinical settings.

AVAA remains proud to support initiatives that strengthen audiology practice, promote collaboration, and enhance access to high-quality tinnitus care for Veterans nationwide.

PUPPY  
EDITION!



# Pets of AVAA



Meet **Tuxedo**! Tuxedo is a 4-month-old mini poodle pup, already making himself right at home. He has the cutest signature black-and-white coat and curls still on the way. He's equal parts curious explorer and affectionate companion. He is known for giving the best hugs. Tuxedo loves a good walk, a cozy moment by your side, and his absolute favorite treat: a lick mat topped with pumpkin purée (yum). **Dr. Paris Florence** (Washington DC VA) and family are excited to share life with him—and all the little lessons, laughter, and pauses that come with watching him grow.

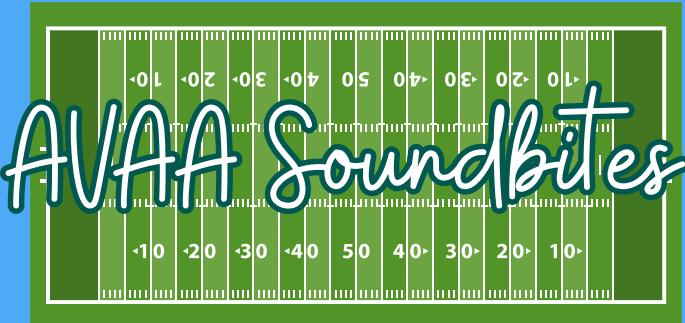


**Abby** is a 6 month old scruffy rescue mix (DNA test said Beagle, Poodle and...GOLDEN RETRIEVER??). She was very shy when she first arrived in her furever home, but through some puppy play class and lots of play time with human kids, she has blossomed into a very fun, energetic and snuggly dog. She is very happy she was rescued by **Dr. Stacey Sturgulewski's** (Hines VA) family.



Have a furry friend you'd like featured in "Pets of AVAA?  
E-mail us at [newsletter@myavaa.org](mailto:newsletter@myavaa.org)



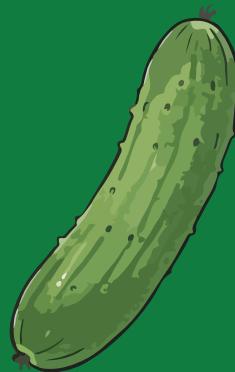


Looking for a mouthwatering dip to serve at the next big game? **Dr. Sunny Burdick** from VA Northern California Health Care System has you covered. Check out the viral pickle dip she shared!

## Viral Grillo's Pickle Dip Recipe

### Ingredients

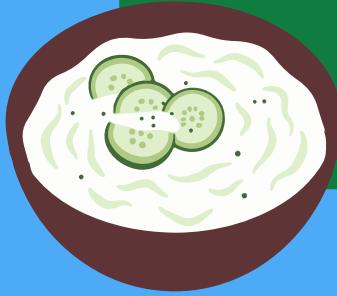
- 1 Container (32 oz) Grillo's Dill Pickle Spears (chopped, reserve the juice)
- Jalapeno, diced. I only used half, without the seeds. You pick your heat
- ½ Cup Green Onions, chopped
- 1 ½ Cups Greek Yogurt
- 8 oz Whipped Cream Cheese
- ½ Cup Sour Cream
- 1 Cup Shredded Cheddar Cheese
- 1 Package Ranch Seasoning
- Hot Sauce - To taste (a few shakes or more to your liking)
- ½ Cup Bacon, chopped or Bacon Bits
- 1-2 TBSP of reserved Pickle Juice



Chop pickles so they are in fairly small pieces. Reserve the liquid in the container for now.

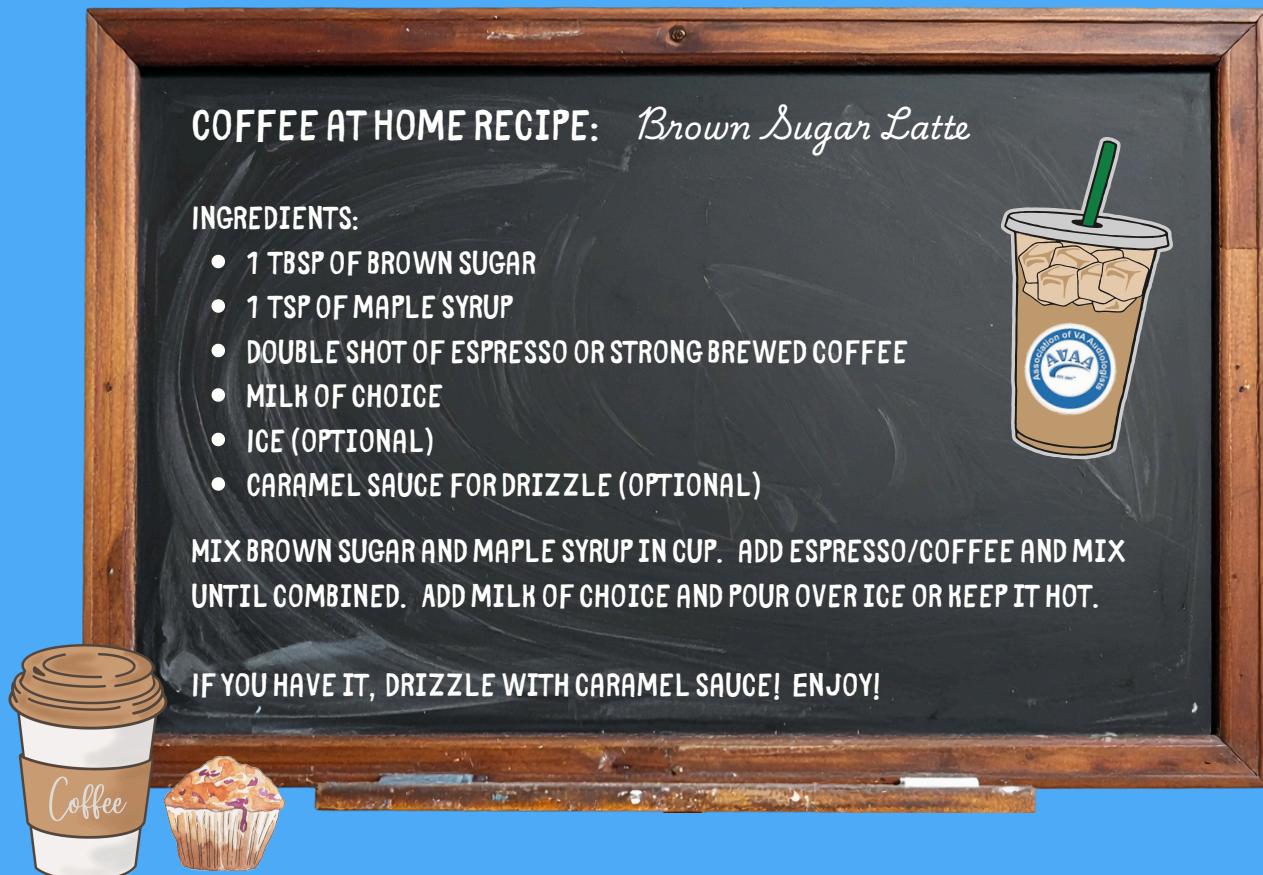
Add chopped pickles to a bowl, add in diced jalapeno, add in chopped green onions, Greek Yogurt, Whipped Cream Cheese, Sour Cream, Shredded Cheese, Ranch Seasoning, Hot Sauce to taste, Chopped Bacon pieces, & 1-2 TBSP of the reserved pickle juice.

Once you are happy with the taste, you can dispose of the pickle juice or save in a different container if you will be using your Grillo container to serve your dip.



## AVAA Soundbites - Continued

**Dr. Sunny Burdick** from VA Northern California Health Care System also shared her favorite coffee recipe - It's perfect for your next java break!



**COFFEE AT HOME RECIPE: Brown Sugar Latte**

**INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 TBSP OF BROWN SUGAR
- 1 TSP OF MAPLE SYRUP
- DOUBLE SHOT OF ESPRESSO OR STRONG BREWED COFFEE
- MILK OF CHOICE
- ICE (OPTIONAL)
- CARAMEL SAUCE FOR DRIZZLE (OPTIONAL)

MIX BROWN SUGAR AND MAPLE SYRUP IN CUP. ADD ESPRESSO/COFFEE AND MIX UNTIL COMBINED. ADD MILK OF CHOICE AND POUR OVER ICE OR KEEP IT HOT.

IF YOU HAVE IT, DRIZZLE WITH CARAMEL SAUCE! ENJOY!





**Have a great idea for the  
next edition of the  
AVAA Amplifier?**

**Let us know! E-mail us at  
[newsletter@myavaa.org](mailto:newsletter@myavaa.org)**