

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### ***Now Hear This: The Sweet Sound of Wi-Fi for the Ears***

Bruce Weston, a retired school psychologist in Rohnert Park, Calif., had given up one of his favorite pastimes: watching movies with his wife. Even with his hearing aids, Weston, 75, couldn't make out the dialogue. "I figured it was a part of my life that was just gone," he says. Then, in January, Weston installed an electronic "hearing loop" system in his living room. Much as a "Wi-Fi" network delivers wireless Internet access to computer users in coffee shops, a loop system takes sound from an electronic source and delivers it, via hearing aids, right into a listener's head.

Weston's setup carries sound from his TV's audio-out port through a wire run around his living room floor, under the rug. Anyone inside the loop who's wearing hearing aids outfitted with a T-coil—his, like most, are—finds them turned into wireless loudspeakers. Weston is again enjoying DVDs. "I'm so happy," he says. "I regained something I thought was lost."

A home loop system costs about \$200 and can be installed in about 40 minutes. If you don't wear a hearing aid, the system also works with a pocket-size receiver and headset that sell for about \$100. A loop system is "inexpensive, unobtrusive and makes hearing aids twice as useful," says Bill Diles, an audiologist in Santa Rosa, California.

The technology is also finding its way into such public venues as churches and airports. Look for a blue-and-white logo with an ear and a "T."