

INFORMATION FROM

Associated Audiologists, Inc. *"Hearing Your Best for Life"*

Dr. Battani Helps Young Patient with Hearing Loss

Jenson Fisher is a typical 10-year-old boy. He loves sports, especially baseball and basketball, and he's a good student. But he also has something most 10-year-olds don't—a mild hearing loss in the higher frequencies.

Jenson's mom, Jennifer Fisher, said she and her husband, J.C. Fisher, became aware of the problem when Jenson didn't pass his preschool hearing test at 4 years old.

"It was a routine screening, but it broke my heart just a little bit to think that Jenson might have problems hearing," Jennifer said.

That's because J.C., who is a professional singer and one-third of the singing group the Texas Tenors, has struggled with hearing loss since grade school. The Fishers knew it was a possibility that Jenson might have inherited his father's hearing loss, and they took Jenson's test results seriously.

To be sure the first screening wasn't a fluke, the preschool tested Jenson twice more. "The results were the same," Jennifer said. At 5, Jenson began having routine hearing check-ups at Associated Audiologists, the same practice J.C. relies on to be sure he hears his best.

"Jenson's audiogram showed he had a hearing loss, but at that point, it wasn't severe enough for him to start wearing hearing aids," Jennifer said. Instead, the family continued to monitor his hearing, and made his teachers aware of the potential problem.

Jenson did well in kindergarten, first and second grades, but this past year, his third-grade teacher at Horizon Elementary School, Lisa White, noticed he was working harder than his classmates to keep up in the classroom.

"I noticed at night that Jenson would be exhausted, but I just thought that was Jenson," Jennifer said.

"Dr. Battani pointed out that he was probably putting so much energy into trying to hear what the teacher was saying, that he was worn out at the end of the school day."

Jennifer also noticed she repeated herself often when talking to Jenson, and it was tough to get his attention unless they were in the same room, or she was looking directly at him.

"At first I just chalked it up to Jenson being an ornery little boy," Jennifer said, "but there was more to it than that."



Dr. Battani

Lisa Battani, Au.D., Jenson's audiologist, confirmed that his hearing loss had progressed, and that now would be a good time to consider hearing aids. "We worked with Dr. Battani and involved Jenson's teacher in the process," Jennifer said.

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Hear Here...

By Tim Steele, Ph.D., President,
Associated Audiologists, Inc.

Three important values I learned from my parents are to work hard, be honest, and do what you say you are going to do. These values are critical for Associated Audiologists, Inc. and serve as the foundation for our company. I believe that relationships matter. If our relationships with patients aren't built on trust, honesty, respect, and professionalism, then we have nothing to stand on.

I realize the world can be a complex place and it seems to be getting harder to find the truth. At every turn, there seem to be misleading advertisements, false information on the internet, and "wolves in sheep's clothing" looking for a fast buck. However, there are still good, hard-working, truthful, reliable people and organizations that are genuine in their desire to help others. Here are some strategies I use to make solid decisions, even in today's complicated environment:

1. **Listen to word-of-mouth referrals from trusted family, friends, and advisors.** In 2017, 72 percent of new patients at Associated Audiologists, Inc. came to us via friends and family or a physician referral.
2. **Look for positive reviews online or call reliable references.** Associated Audiologists has over 150 positive reviews online. You can leave a review or see some of our reviews on our website at www.hearingyourbest.com. From the home page click on "Real Patient Reviews."
3. **Consider available research/literature/reports.** Many people ask us about the benefits of amplification or the risks of untreated hearing loss. There is strong and substantial research available on these and many other topics.
4. **Understand your options.** When it comes to your healthcare, there are always options. Associated Audiologists works hard to provide our patients with a variety of options, including different technology levels and/or manufacturers when appropriate.
5. **Consider the business history and longevity.** Associated Audiologists is locally owned, operated, and staffed. We were established in 1985.

If you are reading this article, I hope you became acquainted with Associated Audiologists through a dependable family member, friend, physician, or referral. We take pride in doing our best to treat each patient individually. I believe this philosophy has translated to a collective positive reputation of our staff, our organization, and our profession for the 33 years we've been in business. Thank you for trusting us with your hearing, tinnitus, and dizziness/balance needs. We are pleased to be "hear" for you!



Red Scarf Reminder

There's still time to get your red scarves turned in to Terri Phillips, our medical transcriptionist and claims assistant. Terri, Sarah Mediavilla, Au.D., audiologist, and our patients are donating hand-knitted or crocheted scarves to the Red Scarf Project for the coming year.

Associated Audiologists began participating with this initiative in 2015. Since then, patients and staff have contributed more than 100 hand-made red scarves to the effort. The Red Scarf Project is a multi-faceted charity program that benefits foster children once they "age out" of the system and go to college.

The organization accepts donations of hand-knitted or crocheted red scarves, which are given to the college-age students on Valentine's Day each year. They also provide these students with an emergency fund donation program and book money. The project has delivered over 20,000 scarves to foster youth in college and training programs across the U.S. since they began the Valentine's Day packages in 2005. Associated Audiologists also is assisting with this project by covering the cost of shipping for the scarves.

Scarves are due to Terri by Dec. 1, 2018.
For more information, call 913-403-0018.
You also can find project details and patterns at: <http://www.fc2success.org/how-you-can-help/red-scarf-project/>.

Don't "Fall" for Winter!

Every second of every day in the United States an older adult falls, making falls the number one cause of injuries and deaths from injury among older Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Often, falls are caused by dizziness or balance disorders, such as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), a common condition we can diagnose and treat at Associated Audiologists. But winter, with icy and slick conditions, can make falling an even greater hazard, no matter what your age. Here are some suggestions from the National Institutes of Health to help you prevent falls.

Outside:

- > Use a cane or walker if needed.
- > Wear rubber-soled shoes so you don't slip.
- > Walk on grass when sidewalks are slick.
- > Throw salt or kitty litter on icy sidewalks.

Inside:

- > Keep rooms free of clutter, especially floors.
- > Wear low-heeled shoes.
- > Do not walk in socks, stockings, or slippers.
- > Be sure rugs have skid-proof backs or are tacked to the floor.
- > Be sure stairs are well lit and have rails on both sides.
- > Put grab bars on bathroom walls near the tub, shower, and toilet.



- > Use a nonskid bath mat in the shower or tub.
- > Keep a flashlight next to your bed.
- > Use a sturdy stepstool with a handrail and wide steps.
- > Add more lights in rooms.
- > Buy a cordless phone or cell phone so that you don't have to rush to the phone when it rings and so that you can call for help if you fall.

If you have dizziness, vertigo, imbalance, or a history or fear of falling, you may benefit from a comprehensive equilibrium evaluation.

To request an appointment with Danielle Dorner, Au.D., our dizziness and balance specialist, please call 816-442-7831, or talk with your physician about a referral. We offer testing at our Overland Park and Northland Clinics.

Dr. Battani Helps Young Patient with Hearing Loss *continued from page 1*

Today, Jenson wears two royal blue mini behind-the-ear hearing aids. "I told Jenson he could pick a color that would blend in with his hair so that no one would see them, but he didn't care about that. He's a big Royals fan so he picked royal blue," Jennifer said.

This is the first school year Jenson will have had hearing aids, and the Fishers are hoping they will help their son stay on track with his learning. In addition to playing sports, Jenson is developing a love for music—he's in the choir and is taking piano lessons. "Dr. Battani is clearly personally

invested in the well-being of her patients. She has held our hand through this whole process, and I feel really great about Jenson working with her over the next several years," Jennifer said. "We've had a great experience with Dr. Battani and Associated Audiologists."

What's that Ringing in Your Ears?



The holidays are here, but if you're hearing a constant ringing, buzzing, white noise, crickets chirping and/or roaring sound, it's probably tinnitus, not sleigh bells. In fact, according to the American Tinnitus Association (ATA), tinnitus is very common, affecting approximately 50 million Americans to some degree. Usually it is a sound that only you can hear.

Although these descriptions are typical, each individual's experience can be different, and is an important clue that you need to pay attention to your hearing.

"Your ears aren't supposed to ring," explained Tim Steele, Ph.D., President, Associated Audiologists. "If they do, your body, specifically your ears and brain, are trying to tell you something, and you should listen to it."

In fact, according to research published in the *American Journal of Medicine*, 90 percent of individuals with tinnitus also have hearing loss. Many times, the tinnitus and hearing loss are caused by damage to the nerve cells within the inner ear. This damage can occur from a number of sources, including exposure to excessively loud sounds, health conditions like diabetes, and medications that damage the ear. Tinnitus also can be caused by impacted ear wax. In very rare cases, underlying medical conditions may cause tinnitus.

"Many times, a comprehensive hearing evaluation reveals the individual has a hearing loss, and

tinnitus is one of their first symptoms," Dr. Steele added. In some cases, a hearing aid may be the most effective treatment, improving the patient's hearing, and helping the tinnitus. "We have a number of great hearing aid options," he said. "Some even have built-in tinnitus maskers that can be very successful."

"Probably the most important thing to know is you don't have to live with tinnitus.

If you feel like you need help, you probably do."

— Dr. Smittkamp

Unfortunately, 2 million people have tinnitus so severe they cannot function "normally" on a day-to-day basis. Susan Smittkamp, Au.D., Ph.D., Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivity specialist, has advanced training and

expertise in this field and works with patients with severe tinnitus.

To treat their tinnitus, she uses the most sophisticated technology. For some patients with tinnitus, hearing aids can provide a good solution, but for the most complex cases, more sophisticated management may be necessary.

Associated Audiologists is the exclusive provider of two of the newest FDA-approved tools for tinnitus management, Desyncra™ for Tinnitus, and the Levo System from Otoharmonics.

"If you don't have a hearing loss or a hearing aid doesn't provide sufficient relief, we have other sound therapy options available," Dr. Smittkamp said. "Probably the most important thing to know is you don't have to live with tinnitus. If you feel like you need help, you probably do."

Dr. Steele added, "I would encourage anyone who has ringing in their ears to schedule a comprehensive hearing evaluation with a doctoral-level audiologist. This is the first step in identifying tinnitus and treating the problem."

Call 913-403-0018 to schedule an appointment with Dr. Smittkamp.

Hear for the Holidays

The holidays bring families and friends together for dinners, parties and other special events. For people with hearing loss, this can be a frustrating season as you struggle to hear in challenging listening environments, like restaurants or in theaters.

What can you do to improve the odds that you won't miss a word at these gatherings?

First, be sure to wear your hearing aids, and if you're having problems hearing, schedule an appointment with your audiologist for a check-up. It may be time for an adjustment to fine tune your devices, or it could be time for new hearing aids.

Here are a few more tips to help you communicate with friends and family during the holidays if you're challenged in difficult listening environments:

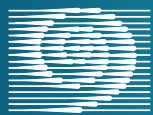
1. Look for a quiet, out-of-the-way area to talk. When everyone is in the same room, the noise level gets louder and louder as more people join the group—that makes it difficult for someone with hearing loss to join in the conversation. If you're hosting an event, you might think about designating a "quiet room" for those who have difficulty hearing.
2. Sit, or ask your host to seat you, in the best place to improve hearing at the dinner table. Look for a spot where you'll be able to make eye contact with others and can read their lips if they're talking. If you're hosting and you have a hearing loss, assign yourself to a seat that makes the most of your hearing. Likewise, if you're aware of any guests with hearing problems, take their needs into account when assigning seats.
3. Candlelight goes with the holidays, but keep the lights on so that anyone with hearing loss can read lips and



follow the conversation easier. Well-lit places help people with hearing loss to use visual clues. Visual cues can help you fill in the conversation blanks and ensure your attention is focused on listening. Vision may improve understanding up to 40 percent!

4. Don't be shy about asking for help—most hosts would be glad if you did! For example, if the television volume is too loud, ask if it can be turned down so you can hear better, or if you're watching a movie with friends or family, ask if the closed captioning can be turned on so you don't have to strain to hear.
5. Family, friends and spouses should expect they may need to repeat what was said more often when you're at holiday gatherings and in challenging listening environments. Ask your conversation partner to speak at a slower rate. This gives your brain time to process what is being said and fills in any information you were unable to understand.

You also might consider investing in advanced hearing and assistive technology. It can help by better highlighting speech from other background noise. Some hearing assistive devices available include Bluetooth technology, integrated applications, customized programs, noise reduction algorithms, remote microphones, and digital, adaptive multi-directional microphones. Your audiologist can recommend the best technology for your circumstances.



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STAFF NEWS

Dr. Steele Co-Authors Book Chapter

Tim Steele, Ph.D., President, Associated Audiologists, and Jack Katz, Ph.D., a researcher, lecturer, and audiologist who specializes in auditory processing disorders, have co-authored a chapter entitled, "Introduction to Aural Rehabilitation" for the textbook, *Handbook for Clinical Audiology*, third edition, by Raymond Hull. The book is used as a teaching tool and reference manual for audiology programs across the country.



Dr. Steele

Best of the Northland



Congratulations to **Katie Petrosky, Au.D.**, our audiologist at our Northland Clinic! Dr. Petrosky was honored to receive the bronze award in the Best of the Northland competition for best audiologist. The annual competition is sponsored by the Courier Tribune newspapers. Winners were selected in a readers' poll.

Associated Audiologists Sponsors Kansas Rocks Concert

Tim Steele, Ph.D., President, and his wife Julie, who is director of operations, their daughter, Meg, and their Rotary exchange student from France, Louis, recently attended the KANSAS Rocks the Oregon Trail concert held at Alcove Springs Park in Marshall County, Kan. Associated Audiologists was one of the corporate sponsors for the event, which was coordinated by the Marshall County Arts Cooperative.



Practice Awards Scholarships at KSHA

Associated Audiologists recently awarded two scholarships at the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association annual meeting to students pursuing doctorate of audiology degrees.



Jonathan York is a doctorate in audiology student at Wichita State University and is currently performing his externship with Associated Audiologists in Kansas City. His research topic is, "The Over-the-Counter Hearing Aid Act: Its Implications and Effect on Audiology Private Practice." Prior to studying audiology, Jonathan graduated from Manhattan Christian College with a bachelor's of science degree in management and ethics. Following graduation, he worked as a firefighter and paramedic for the Junction City Fire Department.

Rebekah Highfill is pursuing a doctorate in audiology at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She earned her bachelor of arts in communication sciences and disorders at Wichita State University. Her research is focused on, "Differences between Left and Right Ear Speech Auditory Brainstem Response in a Group of Young, Normal Hearing Adults." Rebekah has a variety of clinical interests including auditory evoked potentials, vestibular disorders, and tinnitus. Her research interests are comprised of auditory evoked potentials and hidden hearing loss.

Practice Takes Part in Hear2Help KC Event



The Steele family, their Rotary exchange student from France, Louis, and guests attended the first annual fundraiser at **Top Golf for Hear2Help KC**, which raised money, awareness, and support for children and their families with hearing loss. Specifically, funds raised will go to help children with hearing aid expenses, especially those with limited means. Associated Audiologists was one of the proud sponsors for this great event and cause.

Support the Audiology Patient Choice Act

Associated Audiologists continues support for the passage of the Audiology Patient Choice Act.



The act would provide Medicare patients with direct access to a doctoral-level audiologist without a referral from a primary care provider and would streamline access and care for many of our patients, reducing wait times for appointments and the need for paperwork.

Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., Clinical Services Director, Senior Audiologist, and Practice Advocate, is working on national efforts with state American Academy of Audiology (AAA) and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) chapters from across the country to obtain endorsements of the act. She also has been able to secure endorsements from several local physicians and academic professionals from the University of Kansas.

"Dr. Baldwin's work has been instrumental in the progress we have made in getting important endorsements of the act, but we still need your help," said Tim Steele, Ph.D., President, Associated Audiologists.

If you would like to support this movement, you can help by contacting your senators and representatives.

Visit <http://18x18.org/congressional-connect> and select the Enact HR 2226/S 2575 Audiology Patient Choice Act and then select the form letter you would like to use depending on your role (patient, audiologist, administrator).

If you would prefer to make a financial contribution to support this effort, visit <https://www.audiologist.org/advocacy/patient-choice-act>, and select "Donate to the Audiology Patient Choice Act Campaign Fund."

Routine Hearing Aid Checks

Hearing aids are small, electronic devices that are exposed to a variety of elements that unfortunately work against them. Oil, wax, dry skin and perspiration are all part of a normal, healthy ear, but can damage your hearing aids over time.

When you bring them in for routine cleanings, your audiologist can take certain components of your aid apart in order to clean out the microphones, speakers and battery compartments. This helps them stay clean and dry, which will reduce repairs in the long run.

Some hearing aids also have disposable parts, such as tubing or domes, that need to be replaced regularly to keep them functioning at their optimum performance. We recommend pre-scheduling your routine maintenance at regular intervals as determined by your provider.

Some patients have more wax build-up or excessive oily skin, which requires more frequent visits. Other patients may have very little oil or wax build-up, allowing them to go longer between office cleanings. Most patients will need cleanings once or twice each year.

Routine hearing aid checks also may increase the life of your hearing aids. Industry standards show that most hearing aids last three to five years, but because we provide our patients with routine, thorough follow-up and maintenance, the average lifespan of hearing aids purchased from Associated Audiologists is five to seven years.

If it's been more than eight to ten months since you've seen your audiologist for a routine hearing aid check, call one of our six offices today.

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about hearing
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Hearing Your Best

Let Us Help You with Your Insurance Questions

When it comes to hearing aids, the “ins and outs” of insurance can be very complicated. That’s why we have expert staff in our practice who can verify your coverage and help you fully understand your plan.

As 2018 comes to a close, here are a few things to consider.

1. Associated Audiologists works with more insurance plans than any other private practice in the region, including: Blue Cross/Blue Shield, United Healthcare, TriCare, Humana, Aetna/Coventry, and many more.
2. If your plan helps pay for hearing aids and you have met your deductible for 2018, be sure to schedule a hearing examination and consult before year-end to take advantage of the benefit.
3. If you have a flexible spending account for health care, hearing aids are a qualified expense. In most cases, you must use those dollars in the account before the end of the year, or lose them. Check with your plan administrator to be sure though.
4. If you itemize deductions on your income taxes, hearing aids qualify as a medical expense.

**End-of-the-year appointments fill quickly.
Call 855-547-8745 today!**

