

INFORMATION FROM

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

Lucas Borgman Inspires Staff

Lucas Borgman was 12 years old the first time he knew something was wrong with his vision. "I couldn't see to find my way from our barn to the house in the dark," he said.

Shortly after, Lucas was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative eye disease that causes blindness. He was only in his early teens.

As time went on, Lucas developed other serious medical conditions, including type 1 diabetes, a heart rhythm disturbance, paralysis of the muscles within his eyes and hearing loss. Eventually, doctors confirmed he has a rare mitochondrial disorder that affects all these body systems called Kearns-Sayre syndrome.

As a result, by the time Lucas was in his mid-20s, he was losing more and more of his hearing. Concerned, his mom, Debbie Borgman, scheduled an appointment for Lucas to see Tim Steele, Ph.D., President and CEO of Associated Audiologists.

"The first time we met Dr. Steele, I was worried Lucas might lose his hearing all together," Debbie said.

"I thought, 'Lucas has lost so much already. He can't see. What will he do if he can't hear?'"

Fortunately, Dr. Steele had good news for Lucas and his family. "He told us there was still a lot they could do to help Lucas."

"Lucas has a mild to moderately severe hearing loss, poor speech understanding, and his hearing is slowly declining," Dr. Steele confirmed. "His hearing is his one connection to the outside world. I felt strongly that we needed to do something to help him."

And so he did. To assist the family with finding a cost-effective solution,

initially Dr. Steele fit Lucas with a pair of refurbished hearing aids. Lucas wore them faithfully and took excellent care of them, but eventually they needed to be replaced.

"When I saw Lucas last fall, his ability to hear had declined, plus his hearing aids were 10 years old and just weren't getting the job done any more," Dr. Steele said.

Now in his mid-30s, Lucas works a full-time job, but was concerned about the cost of replacing his hearing aids.

"Hearing aids will allow Lucas to keep working and will help him maintain his connection with the

Continued on page 3



Hearing Your Best



Hear Here...

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

I think we all need a bit of inspiration from time to time. Associated Audiologists, Inc., was able to start 2019 on a very special note. In December, we gave a new pair of Widex Evoke hearing aids that are Bluetooth compatible to an inspirational patient, Lucas Borgman.

Lucas uplifts anyone he encounters with his optimism. He is blind and has a serious medical condition called Kearns-Sayre syndrome, which has also affected his heart. I can tell you that whenever I think I'm having a "bad" day, reflecting on how Lucas faces challenges puts things back in perspective. I would venture to say that Lucas' true vision (on seeing what really matters) and his real heart function (on being able to stay positive and loving) is much better than the average person's.

Even after losing his service dog, Lucas has braved new territory. His ability to navigate his new Bluetooth-capable hearing aids with his smartphone has also been eye opening for me. He's taken on this new challenge despite not being able to see his screen and has taught me new things about low vision accessible applications on his iPhone. Being able to work with patients like Lucas, and each of you, on a daily basis is a true gift to all of us at Associated Audiologists. Thank you for that privilege. Below is small portion from a note that Lucas' mom sent to me.

"Luke is such an inspiration to all of us in his family and to many others that he encounters either on a regular basis or only by chance. He has so much to contend with every day, yet he is upbeat and determined. Thank you so very much for this opportunity. I cannot tell you how much this means to Luke and all of us. You and your entire staff are a blessing and we are so very fortunate to have you in our lives. Luke still has a long road ahead of him, but with people like you, we know that this road will be made just a bit easier for him. God Bless all of you!"

— Debbie Borgman



Batteries Required...

For your convenience, Associated Audiologists sells hearing aid batteries at all of our locations. This professional line of batteries is mercury-free and provides superior performance compared with over-the-counter batteries you might purchase in drugstore chains, at shopping clubs, or online. We provide half-off pricing for our patients, often making them less expensive than what you can buy in retail stores.

These professional batteries work best with the digital technology and wireless connectivity features found in high-performing hearing aids. This means that although less expensive batteries are available, you may end up spending more to power your hearing aids for an equal amount of time. In addition, less expensive batteries can negatively affect the performance of your hearing aids.

TIPS TO GET MORE LIFE FROM YOUR BATTERIES:

- > Before putting your batteries in your hearing aids, remove the sticker and expose them to the air for at least 60 seconds. This charges the battery and can help you get 25 to 30 percent longer life from your batteries.
- > Turn your hearing aids off at night, and when not in use. In addition, it's recommended to completely open your battery door/drawer at nighttime.
- > Batteries frequently have a longer shelf life when stored at room temperature. Don't keep them in the refrigerator and keep them out of direct sunlight or heat.
- > An inexpensive battery tester is a good way to check your hearing aid battery's life.
- > Make sure you're aware of the expiration date on your battery packaging.
- > Always keep spare batteries with you.

Be sure to talk with your audiologist about which batteries work best with your hearing aids.

What is Sound Sensitivity?

It's a noisy world—car horns blaring, people shouting, phones ringing, radios turned up at top volume—these sounds can all be annoying, but for most people, they aren't intolerable.

Unfortunately, if you're someone with sound sensitivity, these sounds can be so disruptive, it's difficult to live what most people would consider a "normal" life.

About Sound Sensitivity

There are a number of different types of sound sensitivity or decreased sound tolerance.

- > **Hyperacusis** is decreased tolerance for volumes that are typically well-tolerated by most people. An individual with hyperacusis may experience physical discomfort or pain when exposed to common everyday sounds. The volume at which sound becomes uncomfortable or painful may be different across individuals with hyperacusis.
- > **Misophonia** is decreased tolerance for specific sounds, regardless of volume. Misophonia is also known as selective sound sensitivity. An individual with misophonia may experience a negative emotional reaction such as annoyance, disgust, and/or rage when exposed to specific "trigger" sounds. Trigger sounds are commonly mouth-oriented (such as breathing, chewing, swallowing) or repetitive (such as dripping, clicking, tapping).
- > **Phonophobia** is fear that non-harmful volumes will cause discomfort/pain, hearing loss, or tinnitus. An individual with phonophobia may experience a fearful emotional reaction when exposed to common everyday sounds.

Individuals with sound sensitivity may avoid exposure to common everyday or trigger sounds through lifestyle modifications or overuse of hearing protection. Over time, this can make the sensitivity worse.

Management Options

Hyperacusis may result from a change in auditory function or may occur secondary to brain injury or other health conditions. It is common for hyperacusis to coexist with tinnitus. Hyperacusis is managed through the process of desensitization. Sound therapy for hyperacusis involves consistent exposure to a stimulus that is gradually increased in volume. Improvements in loudness tolerance may happen in as quickly as a few weeks.

The causes of misophonia and phonophobia are less well-understood. A team approach to management may be recommended. Sound therapy has been shown to be an effective management option for these types of sensitivities, often in combination with cognitive behavioral counseling.

Susan Smittkamp, Au.D., Ph.D., specializes in caring for patients experiencing tinnitus and sound sensitivity. Call 913-403-0018 to schedule an appointment with her.

Lucas Borgman Inspires Staff

continued from page 1

world around him," Dr. Steele said. "He is always so upbeat and such an inspiration. I wanted to be able to help him again."

This time Dr. Steele fit Lucas with two new Widex Evoke 440 Fusion hearing aids at no cost. The new hearing aids are equipped with the latest Bluetooth technology, making

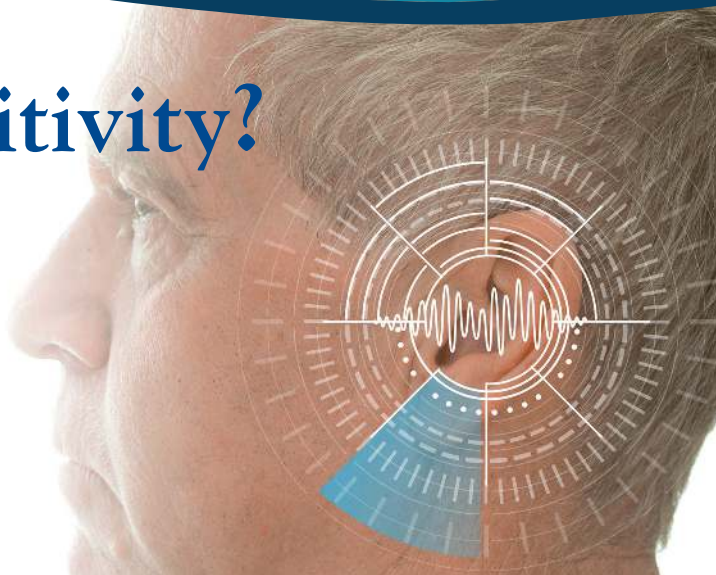
it possible for Lucas to pair his phone with his hearing aids, and to use them to listen to phone conversations and music. They even learn his listening preferences.

"Evoke seemed the perfect fit for Lucas," Dr. Steele said. "He has seen a substantial improvement in his hearing, and is experiencing better speech processing, connectivity and accessibility features that give him a

sense of autonomy."

Lucas has adapted quickly to his new hearing aids, using them to function better at work, at home, with family and with friends.

"I am so grateful for all the office has done for me," Lucas said. "I love to come here, and I've never said that about going to any doctor! I am so thankful for everyone at Associated Audiologists!"



10 Reasons Why

You Should Buy from a Professional Audiology Clinic Versus Big Box Store

If you've ever wondered whether you should purchase hearing aids at a big box/warehouse store like Costco or Sam's Club versus a professional audiology practice, we'd like to break down the main points to consider. Like many purchases we make in life, it's important to weigh the pros and cons so that we can make a well-informed decision.

- 1 Professional audiology clinics such as Associated Audiologists offer doctoral-level audiology care for every patient. At big box stores, there is wide variation in the training, experience, and type of professional you may work with. Some are audiologists, some hearing aid dispensers and sometimes you will see a hearing aid dispenser in training with little to no oversight.
- 2 Professional audiology clinics like ours offer a wide selection of hearing aid technology and products from the world's most respected hearing aid manufacturers. The top technology levels offered at big box stores are often slightly older compared to what's on the private market, and often, manufacturers' most advanced technology is not available in retail stores. Plus, they typically offer only one brand or style.
- 3 Hearing aids purchased at most professional audiology clinics can be serviced and repaired by other professionals. This means audiologists in other states (say you live in Florida or Arizona in the winter) can service your hearing aids. At big box stores, their hearing aid technology is often "locked," or proprietary. This means you can only take your hearing aids to that specific chain for service or adjustment.
- 4 Professional audiology clinics such as Associated Audiologists offer comprehensive care for hearing loss with diagnostic hearing evaluations and reports sent to your primary care physician. Your hearing examination results belong to you as a part of your medical record. At big box stores, the store may actually own the results to your hearing test, not you. That means you may not be able to take your test results to another practice for a second opinion.
- 5 Patients with health insurance may have hearing aid coverage that could help with the costs. At Associated Audiologists we accept Medicare and most other types of health insurance, and investigate whether or not your particular plan has coverage for hearing aids. Most big box stores/warehouses DO NOT accept insurance benefits for hearing aids.
- 6 If you purchase hearing aids and batteries through a professional practice such as Associated Audiologists, they qualify as medical devices and are exempt from sales tax, which may not be the case if you purchase hearing aids or batteries through retail outlets. Associated Audiologists also carries only professional-grade batteries, which are not the same as over-the-counter batteries from retail centers.
- 7 Professional practices such as Associated Audiologists may provide loaner hearing aids in the event your hearing aids need to be sent to the manufacturer for repairs. We also offer Urgent Ear hours for emergent problems or same-day repairs. Many big box stores do not provide loaner hearing aids and they may have limited repair options if the store labeled brands (i.e., Kirkland) end the contracted relationship with the manufacturer for a lower cost vendor or contract.
- 8 Wax removal, a common need for patients, is available in all our clinics. Big box stores do not perform wax removal or provide other important full-service audiology care, such as tinnitus or assessment for dizziness and balance disorders.
- 9 Associated Audiologists recommends and provides regular and critical follow-up appointments for check-ups, adjustments, and monitoring of hearing. This means our patients' hearing aids last longer—five to seven years on average—versus the industry standard of three to five years. Big box stores don't typically pre-schedule routine follow-up appointments. Scheduling follow-up service and appointments can be a challenge in a busy store and is often first-come, first-serve.
- 10 Patient satisfaction is probably the most important difference between buying hearing aids at a discount chain and a professional audiology clinic such as Associated Audiologists. At Associated Audiologists, our patients consistently rate their experience with our practice at 4.9 out of 5 stars. To read our Google reviews, visit www.hearingyourbest.com/recent-patient-reviews.

Bottom line, you may feel you are spending less at a big box store, but this may come with reduced benefit and limited flexibility/service options. Most customers don't return to buy another set. In fact, based on industry data, only 20 to 25 percent of patients return to purchase a second set of hearing aids from a big box store/warehouse.

Although price is an important component when making a hearing aid purchase, good value is tied to other critical aspects. In addition, hearing aid costs from our practice range from \$675 to \$2,600 per ear, giving you quality options for every budget in a professional setting.



Be Alarmed, Stay Safe

Associated Audiologists is dedicated to improving the lives of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and this includes helping to keep them safe in emergencies. Fire safety knowledge and preparedness is a critical component of this. Unfortunately, some recent tragic events have brought this topic to the forefront for us.

According to the American Red Cross, which responds to more than 60,000 house fires annually, fires kill more Americans each year than all other natural disasters combined. Children under 5 and adults over 65 are more than twice as likely to die in a home fire than the rest of the U.S. population.

Jonathan York, a fourth-year extern at our practice, is a former firefighter and paramedic. He says, "Fire safety is close to my heart. Not many people realize that decreased mobility, cognitive ability, vision and hearing impairments can increase the risks of being injured or killed in a house fire; taking precautionary measures could be lifesaving."

Smoke detectors are an important aspect of fire safety and are required to produce sound at 85 dB measured 3 feet from the alarm. While 85 dB may sound loud, it may not be loud enough. To put that number in perspective, the average noise level of a restaurant is around 80 dB, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Many people with hearing losses have greater than 85 dB in the high frequencies and even for those with

milder losses, there are other factors to consider. "It's one thing to be able to hear the smoke alarm when you are wide awake, standing directly under it pushing the button to test it, but would that signal be loud enough to wake you up if you were sound asleep behind a closed door?" asks Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., Senior Audiologist.

Amplified smoke detectors are louder than most smoke detectors, but even those may not be loud enough to wake someone with significant hearing loss. For this reason, many fire departments and the American Red Cross offer special smoke detection systems that can include a strobe light and vibrating bed shakers to assist in notifying those individuals when smoke is present. The Red Cross installs a limited number of specialized bedside alarms for individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. You can contact your local fire department or visit GetASmokeAlarm.org to learn more.

CLOSE BEFORE YOU DOZE

Did you know that fires are getting faster? Due to the use of synthetic materials, the amount of time you have to escape a fire is down to about 3 minutes, compared to 17 minutes 40 years ago!

To slow fire down, the national Close Your Door campaign highlights the importance of keeping bedroom doors closed when you sleep. This simple step can stop the fire from spreading, and keep heat and smoke out, allowing you more time to escape.

For more information, visit closeyourdoor.org.



Want to help others? Join us in supporting fire safety by visiting the American Red Cross campaigns including Sound the Alarm, Save a Life or GetASmokeAlarm.org. Visit RedCross.org/Sound-The-Alarm to learn more.



"Hear" Better with Larry

Many of our patients may remember Larry Ruder, one of our audiologists who retired from practice a few years ago. We're excited to report that Larry is embarking on a new adventure with us! He has just been fit with Widex Evoke hearing aids, and Larry will be sharing his experiences with this exciting technology via the patient newsletter. **Stay tuned to "hear" more from Larry!**

STAFF NEWS

Congratulations Dr. Steele

Congratulations to **Tim Steele, Ph.D.**, President and CEO, on being invited to serve as treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Doctors of Audiology. The ADA is the national professional organization dedicated to the advancement of practitioner excellence, high ethical standards, professional autonomy and sound business practices.

Dr. Steele also was recently elected to serve as the Overland Park Rotary Foundation President, an organization he has been a part of and supported for more than a decade.



More Red Scarves, Please!

WOW! Thanks to our patients and staff for your generous donations of hand-knitted and crocheted scarves to the Red Scarf Project! Associated Audiologists collected 97 hand-made red scarves, a new record! Many thanks also to Terri Phillips, our transcriptionist, for spearheading this 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.

We will be participating with the project again for 2019. If you knit or crochet and want to help out, contact Terri at Associated Audiologists, 913-403-0018.

Scarves are due Dec. 1, 2019. You also can find project details and patterns at: <https://www.fc2success.org/programsmentoring-and-support/red-scarf-project/>.

Congrats Grads

Our externs will graduate in May following completion of their one-year clinical externships. Please join us in congratulating them.

Jonathan York will graduate from Wichita State University with his doctorate in audiology. He has been performing research on the new over-the-counter hearing aid bill. Before studying audiology, he was a firefighter/paramedic. Jonathan and his wife have a young daughter, and they reside in the Kansas City area.



Olivia Olson will graduate from Missouri State University in Springfield, Mo., with her doctorate in audiology. Olivia is originally from Mason City, Iowa. She enjoys playing golf, spending time with friends and family and boating.



Welcome New Externs

Two new externs will join Associated Audiologists this summer as they complete the final year of their doctorate of audiology programs.

Hannah Lee Mahon is a third-year audiology student from Illinois State University. Hannah is especially interested in hearing loss prevention and management for musicians, the subject of her capstone project. Hannah anticipates graduating in May 2020. A native of Payson, Ill., Hannah enjoys playing music with friends and family, volunteering with a high school outreach organization and traveling.



Bailey Base is studying to earn her doctorate in audiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center, and expects to graduate in May 2020. She believes in a patient-centered approach to audiology care in order to best meet each patient's unique communication needs. Bailey is from Brookville, Kan. In her free time she enjoys reading, running, and cheering on the Kansas City Chiefs.



Happy Anniversary

Congratulations to **Sarah Mediavilla, Au.D.**, who is celebrating her five-year anniversary with Associated Audiologists. Dr. Mediavilla has more than 30 years of experience in audiology and specializes in diagnosing hearing loss and hearing aid fitting and verification. She sees patients at our Overland Park and Prairie Village Clinics.

Balancing Life with BPPV

Eighty percent of individuals over the age of 65 will experience dizziness, with approximately 50 percent of those cases attributable to a condition called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo, or BPPV.

BPPV occurs when loose otoconia, known as canaliths, become dislodged and enter the semicircular canals in your ears. BPPV can occur at any age, but is most common between 50 and 70 years. No obvious cause is found in 50 to 70 percent of older patients, but head trauma is a possibility in younger persons.

The symptoms of BPPV are characterized by brief (less than 60 seconds) attacks of true vertigo with a change in the orientation of the ear to gravity. BPPV often is triggered by a quick turn of the head on awakening, rolling over in bed, rising from bed, bending at the waist, or tipping the head back in the shower. Many people may describe a sensation of feeling "off balance" or lightheaded.

According to the Vestibular Disorders Association, there are two types of BPPV, one where the loose otoconia can move freely in the fluid of the canal; and, more rarely, cupulolithiasis, where the otoconia are stuck on the cupula of the canal.

BPPV is not treated with medication. Instead, the most commonly accepted treatment involves moving the displaced otoconia out of the involved semicircular canal and back into the vestibule, better known as canalith repositioning. Once repositioned, the otoconia will dissolve. This is accomplished by a sequence of specialized repositioning maneuvers of the patient, which systematically moves the otoconia to their desired location.

There are several types of repositioning maneuvers for each canal. Treatment is canal-specific and is chosen based on the patient's individual circumstances. Many studies have been done regarding the effectiveness of treatment maneuvers for BPPV, with results showing rates of resolution well into the 90 percent range after one to three treatments.

Danielle Dorner, Au.D., vestibular audiologist with Associated Audiologists, is a specialist in treating patients with dizziness and balance disorders. She has successfully diagnosed and treated hundreds of patients with BPPV.



Dr. Dorner

If you are experiencing dizziness or balance problems, call 816-442-7831 to schedule an appointment with Dr. Dorner.

More and more of our patients are using hearing aids that are compatible with their smartphones. We are happy to help you make the initial pairing of your smartphone and hearing aids, and teach you about the many hearing aid features your smartphone can help you access.

So that your fitting appointment goes as smoothly as possible, be sure to:

- > Have the latest phone operating software installed.
- > Download the app for your hearing aids prior to your fitting appointment.
- > Restart your phone the night before or morning of your fitting.
- > Know how to turn Bluetooth on and off on your phone.
- > Have your Google Play or Apple ID information with you (username and password).
- > Make sure your phone is charged.

If you have questions prior to your fitting appointment, contact your audiologist. You also may contact the consumer hotline numbers for technical assistance with questions related to your smartphone when needed. If you use **ReSound hearing aids**, the ReSound customer hotline number is 855-735-4327, ext. 1. If you use **Widex hearing aids**, the Widex customer hotline number is 844-497-8844.

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Patient Payment Note

Associated Audiologists now requires that patients provide us with their Social Security number and leave a credit card on file for certain diagnostic services, such as our vestibular testing and tinnitus consultations. This is a growing trend in the health care industry.

This allows us to streamline our billing process and help keep costs down considering there is an increase in high-deductible plans and non-covered services. Your card will only be charged for your patient responsibility once your insurance has paid its portion of the claim.

For your protection, all credit card numbers are encrypted, and this information is not stored at the practice.

If you do not have a credit card, you can use a health savings account or flex spending card. The practice also accepts a deposit toward services.

If you have concerns or questions, please discuss alternate payment arrangements with your audiologist at the time of service.



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