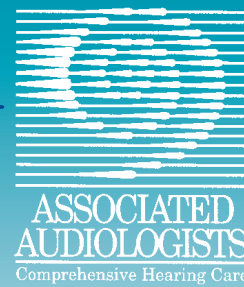


# HEARING

## YOUR BEST



Information From Associated Audiologists, Inc. "Hearing Your Best for Life"

Vol. 13, Issue 3

## Associated Audiologists Unveils New Web Site!

Associated Audiologists has unveiled its new web site! The site's address is still the same, **[www.hearingyourbest.com](http://www.hearingyourbest.com)**, but it has several exciting features we hope you will enjoy.

"We not only have given the site an all-new look, but we've updated and added to all of the information on our site to be certain everything we provide you is the most up-to-date information available," says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, practice president. "We hope you'll check it out and use it often!"

The new web site includes background on the practice, biographies on the audiologists and the five reasons to choose us, but we also have included:

- ▶ A brief pictorial tour of each clinic, along with a mapping feature
- ▶ Patient success stories
- ▶ Latest hearing technology
- ▶ Dizziness and imbalance
- ▶ Tinnitus
- ▶ Troubleshooting
- ▶ News and events, including a sign-up for upcoming workshops



*We hope you'll find our new site easy to navigate. Let us know what you think!*

### CHECK US OUT!

**Win an iPad mini!**

**Sign up for our free e-newsletter and your name will be entered in our drawing!**  
**[hearingyourbest.com/ipad](http://hearingyourbest.com/ipad)**



# HEARING YOUR BEST



## Hear Here...

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

I've been asked a lot recently whether or not there will be significant changes in audiology under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), better known as healthcare reform. Exactly how the ACA will fully impact audiology is not completely clear and we will keep you informed as we continue to learn more.

However, the most obvious change for audiology service delivery will relate to the coordination of care and documentation of quality. Also, hearing aids will remain exempt from tax, even with the new medical device tax under what is called the "retail exemption." This exemption also includes eye glasses and contact lenses.

One thing that will remain unchanged is our strong commitment to quality. Associated Audiologists, Inc. proudly celebrated our 28th anniversary in May. Dr. James Wise founded the practice on high principles—providing outstanding quality, comprehensive, ethical, and customer-focused audiology services.

I pledged to continue this philosophy, while keeping the practice locally and independently owned, when I purchased Associated Audiologists from Dr. Wise in 2010. I speak for Dr. Wise and our entire staff when I assure you that we take the responsibility of your care seriously. We realize there are various product-only options consumers have such as warehouse retail, manufacturer-owned competition, and national franchises. That is why we remain dedicated to delivering cutting-edge audiology care for hearing loss, tinnitus, and dizziness/vertigo—that's the one thing you can count on amidst the many other uncertainties in healthcare.

Thank you for your business and loyalty. We will work hard to maintain your confidence.

## Healthcare Reform Update

Recent healthcare reform mandates have also brought changes to the patient privacy practices of clinics such as Associated Audiologists.

The changes impact the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and how we communicate with you on an ongoing basis. Please be aware that the next time you are in one of our clinics, we may ask you to update your contact information, as well as how you would like us to communicate with you.

### Opt Out Option

If you would like to be removed from the Associated Audiologists, Inc. mailing list for our newsletter and other correspondence, please contact Lisa Caravello, Practice Development Coordinator, at [lisa@hearingyourbest.com](mailto:lisa@hearingyourbest.com), or call 913-498-2827.

### Continued Work with Washington

Healthcare reform actually doesn't require Medicare beneficiaries to make any changes to their existing insurance coverage. But, individuals under 65 must now have insurance or pay a \$95 per person penalty, assessed on their income taxes. To learn more about how to purchase health insurance on the exchange, visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). Everyone under 65 must be covered by Jan. 1, 2014.

In the meantime, Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, practice president, continues to work with Washington leaders and the Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA) to allow Medicare patients the option of going directly to a qualified audiologist for hearing and balance diagnostic tests, without a physician referral.

The ADA also is requesting limited license physician status, which would allow Medicare coverage for a broader range of the services that audiologists already offer patients, but which are not currently covered when audiologists provide the service, such as BPPV (positional vertigo) treatment and ear wax removal. Audiologists are qualified to administer these services and usually are the most cost-effective option.

To help make hearing aids more affordable for all Americans, there also is a proposed \$500 tax credit for the purchase of hearing aids. The credit could be taken once every five years for individuals 55 and over whose adjusted gross income is \$200,000 or less.





## Audiologists Receive Promotions

Several of our audiologists have recently received promotions. Please congratulate them on their hard work and achievements:

- ▶ **David Nissen, Au.D., FAAA**, has been named Prairie Village Manager.
- ▶ **Dana Jacobson, Au.D., FAAA**, has been named Overland Park Manager.
- ▶ **Erica Smith, Au.D., FAAA**, has been named Leavenworth Manager.
- ▶ **Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., FAAA**, has been named Clinical Systems Manager.
- ▶ **Laura Flowers, Au.D., FAAA**, has been named Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivity Manager.

### TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

#### Lyric 2.3 is Here!

The next generation of the Lyric hearing device is now available. This device is designed to fit more patients and provide peak performance. Lyric continues to be the only 100 percent invisible hearing device wearable for months at a time 24/7. The candidacy criteria remains important.

Early results indicate Lyric 2.3 is performing as well or better than the previous version for sound quality and overall patient satisfaction. **Talk with your audiologist to see if you are a good candidate for the latest hearing technology from Lyric.** We fit Lyric at our Prairie Village clinic, 913-262-5855, and soon will expand to offer it at our Overland Park and Manhattan offices.



## Leavenworth and Manhattan Clinics Celebrate Anniversaries

Our Leavenworth and Manhattan Clinics are celebrating anniversaries this fall!

Our Leavenworth Clinic opened in October 2008 in the Cushing Medical Plaza, Suite 105. Erica Smith, Au.D., FAAA, is the senior audiologist and manager who has been dedicated to this clinic since its opening. "Dr. Smith has done a wonderful job of establishing Associated Audiologists at this location," says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, practice president. "She provides an important service to the Leavenworth community."

**To schedule an appointment with Dr. Smith, call 913-682-1870.**

Our Manhattan Clinic opened in September 2012 in the Manhattan Medical Center, Suite 101A. Sam Gillespie, Au.D., FAAA, is the senior audiologist who is dedicated to this clinic. He also sees patients in clinics at Nemaha Valley Community Hospital, Morris County Hospital Clinic and the Washington Clinic. Dr. Gillespie also resides in the Manhattan community. "Dr. Gillespie has worked very hard to help us successfully establish this clinic and we're very excited about the community's response," Dr. Steele says.

**To schedule an appointment with Dr. Gillespie, call 785-539-7361.**

Join the conversation!



Find us on facebook.

[www.facebook.com/  
hearingyourbest](http://www.facebook.com/hearingyourbest)



## Proper Battery Disposal Can Prevent Emergency

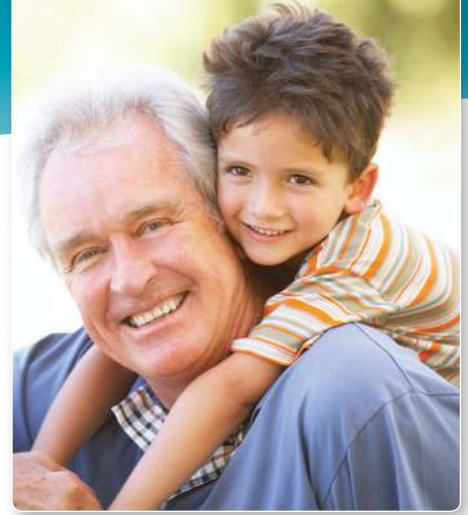
**W**ith the holidays here and families gathered together, be sure to carefully dispose of your hearing aid batteries. "The tiny batteries we use in our hearing aids can easily be swallowed by a small child," says Michael Blum, D.O.,

a pediatrician and patient of Associated Audiologists, Inc.

These batteries can lodge in the esophagus or stomach. When a button battery comes in contact with the digestive system, it lets off an electrical current that begins to burn the body. Serious injury can occur in as little as two hours, burning a hole in the esophagus for example, and creating a medical emergency.

In fact, according to the U.S. Poison Control Centers, each year approximately 3,500 incidents of button battery ingestion are reported. Serious injuries and even death have more than quadrupled from 2005 to 2010.

"As someone who wears hearing aids, I am very sensitive to this issue," Dr. Blum says. "I know how easy it is



to drop a battery or leave one lying around, but it's important to keep your hearing aids and the batteries away from small children," Dr. Blum says.

To keep hearing aid batteries, and all batteries, out of the reach of small children, Dr. Blum suggests you place a jar in your kitchen or bathroom where you can deposit used batteries. "This is a good way to keep our children and grandchildren safe, and collect the batteries for disposal."

We encourage you to dispose of all batteries in an ecologically responsible manner or recycle them. To find a center that recycles near you, visit <http://search.earth911.com> and enter hearing aid battery recycling.

**If a child swallows a hearing aid battery, it is a medical emergency. Call 911 and seek medical help immediately. For more information, you also can call the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or visit [www.poison.org](http://www.poison.org).**



## Tinnitus Program Expands

**Associated Audiologists is expanding our popular tinnitus program, which is now the Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivity Program.**

Based in our Shawnee Mission clinic, Laura Flowers, Au.D., FAAA, will manage the team dealing with tinnitus and sound sensitivity. This will include Susan Smittkamp, Au.D., Ph.D. FAAA, who also sees patients in our Shawnee Mission clinic, and Sam Gillespie, Au.D., FAAA, who sees patients in our Manhattan clinic.

The program features a two-hour initial consultation with one of the tinnitus and sound sensitivity specialists. During this assessment, the audiologist will collect significant information from the patient and will demonstrate some of the equipment and devices used to treat tinnitus.

"We think this is an excellent way for our audiologists to devote the attention necessary to diagnosing and treating tinnitus," says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, practice president. "A significant number of our patients have tinnitus and hearing loss, and there are many effective treatment options available to them."

**For more information about the Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivity Program, call 913-403-0018.**

# Linda Erickson Re-Joins Practice



Linda Erickson, M.A., FAAA, has recently re-joined Associated Audiologists, Inc., and is seeing patients at the practice's Overland Park and Prairie Village clinics. She is specializing in diagnosing and treating hearing loss and tinnitus.

Linda may be a familiar face to many long-time patients—she was an audiologist with the practice from 1995 through 2004, before leaving to spend time raising her children. As an active professional, she has continued to work as a contract audiologist, most recently with the Veteran's Administration here in Kansas City.

"I have really enjoyed caring for the patients at the VA—they have provided a wonderful service to our country and this was a great way for me to give back to the men and women in our military," Linda says.

"But I am also very excited to return to Associated Audiologists. The practice always puts their patients first, and that is consistent with my own personal practice philosophy. It was important to me to join an autonomous private practice. I feel good about being back at Associated Audiologists and the excellent work we do here. My patients will now be friends and neighbors from the community in which I live, and I look forward to using my skills and expertise to help them hear better."

Linda currently is pursuing her doctorate of audiology with A.T. Still University. She earned her master of arts degree in audiology from the University of Kansas and her bachelor of science degree in education from Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kan.

She is a member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association; and the Kansas City Society of Audiology.

Linda resides in Olathe with her husband, Randy, and their three school-age daughters. She enjoys spending time with her family, taking part in school activities with her children and being involved with her church. She also is a runner and participates in local running events.

**To schedule an appointment with Linda, call our Overland Park clinic at 913-498-2827; or our Prairie Village clinic at 913-262-5855.**

## Urgent Ear Clinic

It never seems to fail!  
It's after hours and  
your hearing aid  
stops working.  
What can you do?



Associated Audiologists has started a new Urgent Ear Clinic at its three Johnson County locations to take care of you.

"We know that you rely on your hearing aids to communicate throughout the day, and we want to be able to provide you with prompt service," explains Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, practice president. "We think the Urgent Ear Clinic will be a great resource for you."

When you bring your hearing aids in for repair, one of our audiologists will visually inspect them to determine the source of the problem. If the problem can be repaired in the clinic, we will take care of it the same day.

Urgent Ear Clinic hours are 11:30 a.m. to noon and 4 to 4:30 p.m. each day in the Overland Park, Shawnee Mission and Prairie Village clinics. Services are available on a first come, first served basis. You can wait for the repair to be made, or leave it for pick up later in the day or next day.

If the problem can't be resolved in the clinic, we will return it to the manufacturer for repair. We do have loaner hearing aids available at our clinics and if your hearing aids need to be sent to the manufacturer, we will discuss this option with you.

"In most cases, we can assess the problem, repair your hearing aid and get you back to your daily routine as quickly as possible," Dr. Steele says. To expedite service, please call first.

### For the Urgent Ear Clinic call:

- ▶ Overland Park, **913-498-2827**
- ▶ Shawnee Mission, **913-403-0018**
- ▶ Prairie Village, **913-262-5855**

If you are a patient in our Leavenworth or Manhattan clinics, please call for an appointment before you bring your hearing aid in for repairs.



# HEARING YOUR BEST

## Hunting for Hearing Protection?

The blast from a shotgun can exceed 140 decibels, causing permanent hearing loss. Damage to your hearing occurs when loud sounds reach the inner ear and destroy the tiny hair cells lining this fluid-filled chamber. Once these hair cells are damaged, there is no treatment to repair them. This process can occur from exposure to a single loud blast, or after years of overexposure to gunfire.

Because hearing loss is permanent, the best treatment is prevention. In many cases, over-the-counter earplugs and earmuffs can protect your hearing when hunting or target practicing, but they also block out the sounds around you, or can interfere with your aim.

"We have many hunters who want to be able to hear environmental sounds, such as the wind blowing through the trees or game movement," explains Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., FAAA, senior audiologist with the practice. "The hearing protection we offer provides that situational awareness. It's custom-molded and hand-finished just for your ears."

Associated Audiologists offers both electronic and non-electronic filtered hunter's protection. These custom in-ear filters protect your hearing by compressing the high-impact sound of a firearm, while enhancing low-level speech that is impossible to hear with traditional earmuffs or earplugs. You can carry on a conversation, detect game and hear your surroundings while still being protected from gunshot noise.

For the best fit, filtered hunter's protection requires a personal consultation and custom ear impressions with an audiologist. Prices start at \$140 a pair. **Call the clinic closest to you to schedule an appointment for custom hearing protection, or for more information.**

## Enjoy the *Sounds of the Season*

You'll want to hear your best for the third annual charity concert to benefit The Mission Project, a local non-profit organization helping young adults with disabilities like Down syndrome and autism live and work on their own with minimal support. The concert also benefits First Downs for Down Syndrome.

This holiday concert features the Texas Tenors and the Kansas City Symphony.

**When:** Friday, Dec. 13, 8 p.m.

**Where:** Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, Helzberg Hall

**Join Associated Audiologists, Inc. in supporting this unique holiday concert!**



**The Texas Tenors**

**For ticket information, visit [www.kcsymphony.org](http://www.kcsymphony.org) or call 816-471-0400.**

## STAFF NEWS

**Sam Bittel, Au.D., FAAA**, Vestibular Program Director, recently lectured on the diagnosis and management of dizziness and disequilibrium in adults and children for the Heuser Hearing Institute, Louisville, Ken. In addition, he has recently been made an adjunct professor in the University of Kansas Medical Center Neurology Department, where he lectures on a regular basis. He also is teaching a doctoral-level course on vestibular disorders at KU.



**Laura Flowers, Au.D., FAAA**, Tinnitus and Sound Sensitivity Manager, also was a featured speaker at the KSHA meeting. Her presentation was titled, "Practical Applications of Amplification in Managing Tinnitus Patients."



**Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., FAAA**, senior audiologist and Clinical Systems Manager, has recently been featured on KCTV-5 with health reporter Carolyn Long discussing hearing protection for musicians. In addition, she was interviewed by Meryl Lin McKean, Fox 4 health reporter, to address the issue of hearing protection and the sound level at the Chiefs/Raiders game, where fans set the world record for loudest stadium.



**Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA**, president, recently co-authored a chapter in the book, "Introduction to Aural Rehabilitation, Second Edition," by Ray Hull. Dr. Steele's co-author is Dr. Jack Katz and the chapter is titled, "Introduction to Hearing Impairment and Hearing Disability."



**Associated Audiologists presented** two \$250 scholarships to audiology students at the KSHA meeting. Laina Burdick and Krysta Beaver were the recipients. Both presented their research at a session sponsored by the practice. Laina is a student at Wichita State University and Krysta is a student at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

**Dana Jacobson, Au.D., FAAA**, senior audiologist and Overland Park Manager, was interviewed by Carolyn Long and featured on KCTV-5 regarding hearing protection and the noise level at the Chiefs game.



She also was a featured presenter at the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA) annual meeting. Her talk was titled, "Humanitarian Audiology," and focused on planning and developing outreach programs domestically and internationally.

**Congratulations to Traci Ring**, senior audiologist, on recently earning her doctorate in audiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center. The title of her doctoral research project was, "Comparison of Protocols for Referring Patients to Rule Out Retrocochlear Pathology." The research was conducted at Associated Audiologists.



She currently sees patients at our Shawnee Mission clinic, but over the years has cared for patients in our former Olathe clinic as well.

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Important  
information  
about hearing  
and balance  
health from your  
audiologist.

# HEARING YOUR BEST

## Figuring Your End-of-the-Year Medical Expenses?



Hearing aids usually qualify as medical expenses if you itemize your deductions. Hearing aids also are generally considered qualified medical expenses for flexible spending accounts.

Insurance benefits for hearing aids often change at the beginning of a new calendar year. Make sure you are aware of any changes your insurance plan may have related to possible hearing aid benefits before the year ends.

For complete information regarding the deductibility of hearing aids, qualified expenditures for your flexible spending account and your plan's year end, we suggest you contact your tax advisor and/or flexible spending plan administrator.

Our staff is also happy to provide product quotations and copies of receipts if needed.

**Call the office nearest you to schedule your end-of-the-year appointment today.**