

HEARING

YOUR BEST



Information From Associated Audiologists, Inc. – “Hearing Your Best for Life”

Vol. 12, Issue 1

We're Moving One Block South!

Saint Luke's South Office to Relocate on Campus May 3, 2012

We're excited to announce Associated Audiologists, Inc. is moving our popular Saint Luke's South office one block south May 3, 2012. *(Please note: this move only affects the Saint Luke's South office. Our other four offices will remain in their same convenient locations.)*

Our new space is still located on the Saint Luke's South campus, but will be on the second floor of the **Southridge Medical Building, 12541 Foster Street, Suite 220, Overland Park, KS 66213**. We've taken great care to improve your experience. Our specialty programs will have easier parking and additional space, allowing us to enhance service to our patients experiencing hearing loss, dizziness, imbalance and tinnitus. The office décor will be reflective of a Kansas City theme featuring local landmarks and icons.

“For those of you who are patients in our Saint Luke's South office, you know we have reached capacity and could use more room to serve you better,” says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, president of Associated Audiologists, Inc. “We're excited about relocating our office.”



This is an opportunity to expand into a much more spacious office designed to meet your needs for quality hearing care.” There is also easier access to patient parking, including a circle drive.

Some things haven't changed though. You'll find the same great staff and service at the new Saint Luke's South office, and you can reach us at the same phone number—**913-498-2827**.

Same Great Staff! Whole New Experience!

Our new Saint Luke's South office is designed to accommodate expanded services including:

- Diagnosis and treatment of dizziness and balance disorders
- Tinnitus evaluation and management
- State-of-the-art diagnostic testing for hearing disorders by university-trained audiologists
- Digital hearing aids in all levels of technology, styles and costs
- Hearing aid service and repairs

We're excited to see what you think about our new space. We invite you to drop by for a visit, or schedule an appointment to see one of our university-trained audiologists.



HEARING YOUR BEST



Hear Here...

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



Find us on facebook.

www.facebook.com/HearingYourBest

I knew the time would eventually come, but my son Bo asked to join Facebook recently. He reports, "I'm the only one of all my friends not on Facebook." I'm sure many of you can appreciate the grumblings of a misunderstood teenager whose parents are "completely out of touch." So, after establishing multiple rules and expectations for online behavior, my wife and I relented and helped him create a Facebook account. Of course, we are regulating his account very closely, much to his chagrin.

Ironically, Associated Audiologists, Inc. has just launched a new Facebook page too. Unlike my hesitancy for Bo to join social media, we are very excited about expanding our online engagement. Our social media platform will include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google Plus, and Linked In. We will be offering great opportunities and information for our patients and I hope that all of you will consider joining in the conversation.

The team at Associated Audiologists hopes to use this new platform to expand education, improve our services, and foster advocacy for all who live with hearing loss, tinnitus, or dizziness and balance problems. Please be sure we have your correct contact information so we can

include you. I invite you to learn more about joining the conversation with Associated Audiologists. We think you'll "LIKE" it.



Heart Disease and Hearing Loss May Go Hand in Hand

Recent research indicates there is a connection between heart disease and hearing health.

“You might wonder what your heart has to do with how well you hear,” says Jim Wise, Ph.D., FAAA, president emeritus of Associated Audiologists. “But the inner ear is extremely sensitive to blood flow. Studies have shown that a healthy cardiovascular system—a person’s heart, arteries and veins—has a positive effect on hearing. Conversely, inadequate blood flow and trauma to the blood vessels of the inner ear can contribute to hearing loss.”

In fact a study performed at Wisconsin University on 2,226 participants between 52 and 97 years old found the prevalence of hearing loss among those who have a history of heart disease is 54 percent greater than in the general population. In addition, hearing loss appeared in almost 80 percent of the people who had suffered from a heart attack. The study also found individuals who exercised at least once a week saw a 32 percent reduction in the risk of hearing loss, compared to sedentary individuals.

As part of its outreach efforts, Associated Audiologists is urging people with heart disease to get their hearing checked.

“There is a strong connection between heart disease and hearing loss.

The bottom line is a healthy lifestyle is good for both your heart and your hearing. We urge women and men alike to know their risks and to take action today to protect their heart—and hearing—health.”

— Dr. Wise

Get Proper Diagnosis, Treatment and Counseling Before Purchasing Hearing Aids

There are many great things you can do on the Internet—connect with friends, shop for the latest fashions or book your next trip—but diagnosing and treating a hearing loss shouldn't be one of them.

However, recently a major health insurance provider has announced it is providing online hearing testing and allowing the purchase of hearing aids via the Internet.

This has prompted growing concerns within the health community and is why the Academy of Doctors of Audiology, the American Academy of Audiology, the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and the International Hearing Society urge consumers who suspect they may have a hearing loss to seek treatment from a licensed audiologist or other hearing healthcare professional to ensure proper diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss, and to identify potentially serious underlying medical conditions.

Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, president of Associated Audiologists, Inc., agrees with the recently released position statement. "Diagnosing an individual's hearing loss correctly requires a tremendous amount of expertise and highly sophisticated and calibrated equipment," Dr. Steele explains. "That's something only a licensed audiologist can provide—not something achieved by an online hearing test."

Selecting the right hearing aid for your particular hearing loss also is a complex process requiring the experience and counsel of an audiologist. "Without the proper diagnosis, counseling, hearing aid fitting and follow-up evaluations, the patient cannot achieve successful treatment for hearing loss," Dr. Steele says.

By sidestepping evaluation and treatment with a licensed audiologist, you also run the risk that a more serious health condition requiring medical intervention could be missed. "We often see patients who also have other issues they are dealing with, such as otosclerosis, tinnitus, dizziness or balance disorders, medication conflicts or ear infections. When necessary, an audiologist will refer you to the appropriate medical professional for further evaluation and treatment."

Further, the Better Hearing Institute (BHI) has warned consumers of the risks associated with purchasing over-the-counter, one-size-fits-all hearing aids instead of consulting a hearing healthcare professional.

BHI also points out that hearing devices that are purchased over-the-counter or via the Internet may not fit accurately or be customized to the specific hearing needs of the individual.

"Today's state-of-the-art hearing aids should be programmed to the individual's specific hearing loss requirements in order to provide good levels of benefit and customer satisfaction," says Sergei Kochkin, BHI's executive director. "The process requires a complete in-person hearing assessment in a sound booth; the training and skills of a credentialed hearing healthcare professional in order to prescriptively fit the hearing aids using sophisticated computer programs; and appropriate in-person



Traci Ring, M.S., FAAA, senior audiologist, discusses hearing aid options with a patient.

follow-up and counseling. This is not possible when consumers purchase one-size-fits-all hearing aids over the Internet or elsewhere."

Extensive research shows that individualized hearing health assessments and fittings programmed specific to the needs of the hearing aid user provide the best chance for optimal hearing enhancement and customer satisfaction.

BHI has published a comprehensive consumer guide entitled, "Your Guide to Buying Hearing Aids," available at betterhearing.org.

Associated Audiologists follows "best practices" from the nation's leading professional audiology associations, and also adheres to a strict code of ethics. For more information about Associated Audiologists, including our mission and values, as well as each audiologists' professional qualifications, visit hearingyourbest.com.

Dr. Smith Selected.....▶

Hearing
Professional
of the Year,
Midwest
Region



Erica Smith, Au.D., FAAA, senior audiologist with Associated Audiologists, Inc., has been selected Hearing Professional of the Year for the Midwest Region. She was nominated for the honor by one of her Leavenworth area patients, John Raletz.

“I had noticed that I wasn’t hearing as well as I used to and thought I might have some ear wax that needed to be removed, so I went to see my primary care physician, Richard Whitlow, M.D., also of Leavenworth,” Raletz explains. Instead, Dr. Whitlow advised him to schedule an appointment with Dr. Smith for a diagnostic hearing evaluation. “He thought I might need hearing aids.”

Dr. Smith’s examination revealed Raletz has a hearing loss, one he believes may have been caused by his field military service years earlier. “Now I am a computer systems engineer for the military, and it’s very important for me to be able to hear well,” Raletz says.

At home, Raletz turned the volume up on his television, and family and friends frequently had to repeat themselves to be understood. “I have to admit that before I got my hearing aids, ‘What?’ was the most frequently-used word in my vocabulary.”

But no longer—Dr. Smith’s examination revealed he would be an excellent candidate for hearing aids, and today he wears two open-fit digital devices. “I wear my hearing aids 10-plus hours a day. I am addicted to them, and that’s a great thing. They are indispensable to me.”

And so is Dr. Smith. “Dr. Smith is a consummate professional,” Raletz says. “There are few, if any, people who have changed and improved my quality of life like Dr. Smith has. That’s why I felt it was important to nominate her for this award. She definitely deserves a pat on the back. I also want to thank Dr. Whitlow for suggesting I schedule an appointment with her.”

“It’s just such an honor that one of my patients took the time to nominate me,” Dr. Smith says. “It’s really very touching to realize the impact I have had on his quality of life.”

As a recipient of the Hearing Professional of the Year Award, \$500 was donated in Dr. Smith’s name to a non-profit hearing organization. She has designated those funds for the Kansas School for the Deaf Endowment Association.

The National Hearing Professional of the Year award honors and recognizes hearing professionals for their exceptional service and commitment to the profession. The patient-nominated award spotlights the difference hearing professionals make in the lives of their patients. The competition encourages audiology patients to share their experiences and tell how their hearing professional goes above and beyond the call of duty. The award is judged by an independent panel of industry experts.

Dr. Smith is a member of the Leavenworth Lions Club and has practiced in the community since 2008. Her other educational and professional associations include: Doctor of Audiology, University of Wisconsin-Madison; recipient, Larry E. Marston Outstanding Audiology Undergraduate Student Clinician Award, University of Kansas; board certified, American Board of Audiology; fellow, American Academy of Audiology; certified member, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; member, Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association; member, Kansas Hearing Society; treasurer, Kansas City Society of Audiology; and ad hoc graduate faculty appointment, University of Kansas Medical Center.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Smith, call Associated Audiologists’ Leavenworth office, 913-682-1870, or visit hearingyourbest.com.

NEW TECHNOLOGY ASSISTS PATIENTS WITH One-Sided Hearing Loss



Some patients experience hearing loss in only one ear for a variety of reasons, or have a much greater hearing loss in one ear than the other. This is called asymmetrical hearing loss and no matter how loud or clear sounds are presented to the non-useable ear, the person may hear distortion or nothing at all.

Frequently, a person with one-sided hearing loss has to ask their family members to sit on the side of their “better ear” so they can hear them. Wearing a single hearing aid in the better ear may help, but still may require them to turn their head to get the aided ear closer to the person speaking.

The latest miniaturized technology from Phonak called the CROS offers patients a solution to hear sounds regardless of where they come from. When a person wears a CROS hearing aid, they can hear sounds from that side. They are not *hearing* sounds in the non-useable ear, *but rather they hear sounds from the poor ear in the better ear.*

The CROS consists of two parts—a transmitter microphone for the ear that cannot benefit from a hearing instrument, and a receiver hearing instrument on the better hearing ear. This means sound from the poorer hearing side is wirelessly sent to the better ear.

For example, when the patient’s better ear hears normally, the CROS transmitter on the poorer ear picks up sound and transmits it wirelessly to the normal hearing ear. The hearing in the good ear remains natural and unaffected.

A CROS hearing aid is needed when the patient also has hearing loss in the better ear. The transmitter placed on the poorer ear, picks up

sound and transmits it wirelessly to the better hearing ear. At the same time, the receiving hearing instrument also serves as an amplifier improving hearing in the better ear.

“We have found that this technology is very helpful for patients who previously thought they could not be helped by hearing aids,” says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, Associated Audiologists president. “The technology is really remarkable. Patients report their spouse is now able to sit on their ‘bad side’ at church, in the car or next to them on the sofa, and they can still be heard. It’s proving to be very effective and I would encourage anyone who has a one-sided hearing loss to talk with our audiologists to see if you might benefit from this technology.”



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PRACTICE NEWS

Drawing Winners Announced

Congratulations to the winners of our holiday drawings: Donald W., Prairie Village; Terry T., Shawnee Mission; Bev A., Overland Park; and Geraldine E., Leavenworth. Thanks to all who entered!

Holiday Sponsorships Benefit Community

Associated Audiologists adopted a family from the Kansas School for the Deaf over the holidays, providing gifts for a merry Christmas celebration. The practice also served as a sponsor for The Texas Tenors concert in December 2011. The successful concert event held at the Kauffman Center benefited the Mission Project, a non-profit organization which promotes full, safe, and independent living for adults with developmental and cognitive disabilities such as Down syndrome and autism.

Ruder Completes Term

Larry Ruder, M.A., FAAA, senior audiologist, recently completed a term on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment consumer board, assisting with the development of consumer guidelines and best practices for audiology in the state of Kansas.



Lisa Caravello Joins Practice

Lisa Caravello has joined Associated Audiologists as practice development coordinator. In her new position, Lisa will assist all five offices with a wide range of projects, including office flow optimization, marketing and audiology assistance.



Previously, Lisa served as an account representative with **The Kansas City Star** for 12 years. She resides in Merriam, Kan., with her husband Tony, and their two daughters, Merissa, 10, and Audrey, 8. She enjoys playing violin, piano and singing at the Kansas City Church of Christ and participating in the girls' activities. Lisa recently completed the International Hearing Society's Distance Learning Course in Hearing Instrument Science and Fitting Practices. She also has degrees in communications and music from UMKC.

Lisa will be based at the practice's new Overland Park location.

Dr. Bittel Welcomes New Family Member

Samuel Bittel, Au.D., FAAA, hearing and balance specialist, and his wife, **Brennan**, recently welcomed a new addition into their home, **Grey Alexander Bittel**. Grey was born Nov. 15, 2011, weighing in at 6 pounds, 15 ounces and 18.5 inches long. Brennan is chief resident of neurology at the University of Kansas Hospital. This is the couple's first child.



KSHA NEWS

Associated Audiologists Presents Scholarships

Associated Audiologists, Inc. presented two research scholarships at the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association's annual meeting. **Tammy Gonzales**, practice extern, and University of Kansas audiology student, and **Kayla Eldridge**, Wichita State University audiology student, were the recipients.

Dr. Bittel Serving as KSHA Vice President

Samuel Bittel, Au.D., FAAA, dizziness and balance specialist with Associated Audiologists, is serving a three-year term as vice president for audiology with the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Dr. Bittel represents audiologists across the state in the organization.



Dr. Wise to Serve on KSHA Work Group

Jim Wise, Ph.D., FAAA, president emeritus, Associated Audiologists, will serve on a new work group being developed by the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association on state advocacy. The work group of audiologists will investigate, draft and propose a bill for hearing aid coverage in the state of Kansas, and was created thanks to a grant coordinated by Dr. Bittel from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.



Don't Get Stuck...

Tips for Preventing Ear Tips/Domes from Getting Stuck in Ear Canals

Like any hearing aid, open-fit hearing aid technology that utilizes ear tips or domes requires regular maintenance. Some of the "domes" or "tips" lose their elasticity over time. "When this happens, the dome can no longer grip onto the hearing aid," explains Dana Jacobson, Au.D., FAAA, audiologist with Associated Audiologists.

To prevent a dome from dislodging from the hearing aid and remaining in your ear, Dr. Jacobson advises patients to check the domes each morning with a small tug, ensuring that they hold securely to the aid. "If the dome slides off easily when you check it, you should replace it with a new dome," she says. For those patients who remove the domes to change filters, it is important to wipe down the aid and remove any moisture/oil before putting the dome back on. This ensures that the dome makes good contact with the aid.

If you do get a dome stuck in your ear, please contact our office. An audiologist should be able to see

you the same day. If this occurs during an evening or weekend,

it is not necessary to visit the emergency room unless you are experiencing pain or discomfort. "Do not try to remove the dome on your own," Dr. Jacobson advises. "It could get pushed deeper into the ear canal. Also, do not re-insert the hearing aid until after having your ear examined. It is safe for the dome to remain in your ear until it can be removed in the office."

To troubleshoot possible problems with your hearing aids, visit hearingyourbest.com and select "Hearing Aid Support." There, you will find potential solutions to a wide range of problems patients frequently encounter. If you cannot resolve your problem using this guide, please contact one of our offices to see an audiologist.



May is Better Hearing and Speech Month,

first established in 1927 by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association as a time to encourage Americans to get their hearing evaluated.

According to the Better Hearing and Speech Council, the financial dangers of leaving hearing loss unaddressed can be significant. For example, people with untreated hearing loss lose as much as \$30,000 in income annually, depending on their degree of hearing loss. However, in a recent Better Hearing Institute study, the use of hearing aids was shown to reduce the risk of income loss by 90 to 100 percent for those with milder hearing loss, and from 65 to 77 percent for those with severe to moderate hearing loss. What's more, hearing aid use was shown to reduce unemployment among hearing aid users.

Be sure you are hearing your best. Call one of our offices today to schedule a comprehensive evaluation.

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Important
information
about hearing
and balance
health from your
audiologist.

HEARING YOUR BEST



BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Hearing and Balance Workshop!

Join the experts from Associated Audiologists, Inc.,
Thursday, May 24, 2012 for a Hearing and Balance Workshop
at Meadowbrook Country Club, 9101 Nall, Prairie Village, Kansas.

Learn about the latest developments in hearing aid technology,
how to find the right hearing professional, tips for purchasing hearing
aids, improving telephone use, balance and dizziness issues, tinnitus
and much, much more.

**Call 913-403-0018 for more information, to refer a friend to attend,
or to reserve your place at this free educational workshop.**

Be sure and visit our Web site at hearingyourbest.com for additional information.