

# Hearing Your Best



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INFORMATION FROM

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

## Associated Audiologists Celebrates 35 Years!

### Remember 1985?

- > The Kansas City Royals played the St. Louis Cardinals in the legendary I-70 World Series and won!
- > A gallon of gas was \$1.09.
- > The interest rate from the Federal Reserve was 10.75.
- > A postage stamp cost .22 cents.
- > Version 1.0 of Windows was released and the first .com address was registered.
- > And Associated Audiologists opened its first clinic at Olathe Medical Center.



Fast forward to today, and Associated Audiologists is still here, continuing to grow and change to meet the needs of our patients, and celebrating our 35th Anniversary in May!

"We owe a great debt of gratitude to our founder, Dr. James A. Wise and his wife, Carody," says Tim Steele, Ph.D., FAAA, president, Associated Audiologists. "They helped establish the mission, vision and values we follow to this day."

Though technology is an important aspect of the work audiologists do, and it's changed dramatically in the last 35 years, Dr. Steele says it's the relationships our audiologists have with you, the patients and their families, that differentiates Associated Audiologists from others.

"Hearing loss doesn't just affect the individual patient, it affects everyone around them—family, friends and co-workers," Dr. Steele says. "Over the years, we have established relationships with entire families, and have taken care of several family members and multiple generations. Helping our patients improve their lives through the comprehensive audiology services we offer is a very rewarding career for everyone at Associated Audiologists. Thank you for entrusting us with your care, and please stay safe during this unprecedented time."

**May 1985**—Dr. James A. Wise and his wife, Carody, establish Associated Audiologists, Inc., at Olathe Medical Center, Olathe, Kansas.

**1989**—Second clinic opens in the Prairie Village Office Center, Prairie Village, Kansas.

**1999**—Third clinic opens on the campus of Saint Luke's South, Overland Park, Kansas.

**2008**—Fourth clinic opens in the Cushing Medical Plaza, Leavenworth, Kansas.

**2008**—The original Olathe clinic relocates to the campus of Shawnee Mission Medical Center, Shawnee Mission, Kansas, now AdventHealth.

**2010**—Dr. Steele and his wife, Julie, purchase the practice from Dr. Wise and Carody.

**2011**—The Shawnee Mission clinic relocates to the Antioch Hills Medical Building, Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

**2012**—Fifth clinic opens in Manhattan, Kansas after purchasing Audiology Associates.

**2012**—Overland Park clinic relocates to the Southridge Medical Building, Overland Park, Kansas.

**2014**—Sixth clinic opens north of the Missouri River in the Embassy Park Professional Building, Kansas City, Missouri.

**2014**—Dr. Wise and Carody retire from the practice.

**2015**—Associated Audiologists Celebrates its 30th Anniversary.

**2017**—Dr. Steele named a Hero in Healthcare by *Ingram's Magazine*.

**2019**—Seventh clinic opens in Eastern Jackson County, Independence, Missouri.

**April 2020**—COVID-19 pandemic.

**May 2020**—The practice celebrates 35 years and has grown to include seven clinics, all staffed by doctoral-level audiologists.

# Hearing Your Best



## Hear Here...During COVID-19

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

This column was originally drafted in early March before things dramatically changed for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of what I wrote then is relevant still, but it seems like my own perspective has changed, even in just a matter of weeks.

Associated Audiologists, Inc., is celebrating our 35th anniversary in May. During this time, we've been through ups and downs, but I'm not sure any of us could have fully imagined a pandemic, especially as we prepared for our 35th anniversary.

Many things have changed over these 35 years; however, the core principles that guide our company have remained unchanged and have helped me during this crisis. Some of these principles include: doing the right thing, treating others with respect, focusing on relationships, and living with integrity. I believe these values have, and will, continue to serve us well.

Julie and I will also be celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary in July, so one thing that stands out to me is the importance of relationships. Our marriage wouldn't have lasted for 25 years if we hadn't focused on our relationship. Staying at home during this crisis has deepened our appreciation for one another, our family, and made our wedding vows even more sacred.

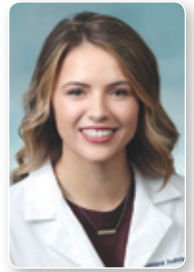
Associated Audiologists wouldn't have lasted 35 years if we also hadn't focused on important relationships, too. As our patients and friends, you have been the critical factor in our longevity, and we will continue to focus on these important relationships, one person at a time.

Things may look a little different in the near future as we try to return to some normalcy, but our relationships with you remain at the heart of what we do. We will need you more than ever in the coming days, as our business is dependent upon each of you.

In January, we held a retreat and I highlighted several points below. It seems like forever ago now, but a few of my retreat pointers stand out as I reflect on life during this pandemic:

1. Patients and their families will always value quality service and sincere relationships. When this occurs, loyalty is a natural and desired outcome. We only exist because of our patients.
2. Technology will continue to change and improve, but we must remain on the cutting edge of exploring, understanding, and using technology for maximum patient benefit. Thank goodness for many of these technologies now which have helped us stay connected.
3. Technology can only take us so far. A superb audiologist will be necessary to close the gap between technology and full potential. A compassionate professional will always be necessary for successful rehabilitation.
4. A positive patient experience will continue to set us apart. We must stay focused on providing outstanding patient experiences in how we treat, care for, and respect our patients. We will continue to focus on personal relationships with our patients and their loved ones, despite living in a digital age.

We look forward to celebrating 35 years of audiology care in our communities. I'm grateful for your business now more than ever. It is our hope that we can keep you connected, even if we are experiencing temporary stay-at-home orders. Stay well and remember that we are "hear" for you!



## Bailey Base Joins Practice

If you've been to Associated Audiologists recently, you may have met Bailey Base, one of our externs. Bailey is graduating from the University of Kansas Medical Center with her doctorate in audiology, then is joining the practice this summer as the newest member of our team.

"I've always been interested in a career that involves helping people and I wanted to work in the medical field," Bailey says. "Audiology is a perfect fit for me. I enjoy getting to know our patients and assisting them with hearing aid technology. It has a big impact on their quality of life."

Bailey is originally from Brookville, Kansas, near Salina. She moved to Lawrence for college, earning her bachelor of arts degree in speech-language-hearing; and her doctorate in audiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center.

"I'm excited to join Associated Audiologists," Bailey said. "Because I've worked in other clinics, I can compare the level of practice provided here, and it's unparalleled. Each audiologist goes above and beyond for their patients, doing what's best for them. I wouldn't hesitate to send my own family members here. We really do put patients first."

Away from work, this loyal Jayhawk is enjoying exploring Kansas City—including concerts, barbecue, and cheering on hometown favorites, the Kansas City Chiefs and Royals.

**Bailey will see patients  
in several of our metro clinics.  
Call 855-547-8745 to schedule  
an appointment.**

## PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

# Better Hearing Keeps Judy and Arnold Nagely Active and Engaged

Judy and Arnold Nagely are prime examples of how hearing aids can help you stay active and engaged in business and the community.

**A**rnold, 77, and Judy, 76, said they both first noticed problems hearing about three years ago.

"I was having difficulty hearing church services, and the voices of our grandkids," Judy said. "And when our daughter would come over, she'd say, 'Mom, the TV is so loud!'"

Arnold, who owns Valley Vet Supply, had similar issues, but said he also was missing out on conversations at work. "I found myself asking, 'What?' a lot," he said. "And I was getting better at lip reading."

When Judy mentioned their problems hearing to her brother, he recommended they see Sarah Schotte, Au.D., the doctoral-level audiologist who cares for patients in the Associated Audiologists Manhattan Clinic.

Dr. Schotte has been with the practice for three years, and enjoys working with her patients, learning about their lives, the challenges they face with their hearing, and helping them find the best solutions for their budget and lifestyle.

The Nagelys came to their first appointment together, a routine that works well for them.

"We live in Marysville," Judy said. "It's about an hour drive to the clinic in Manhattan, but it's worth it." Judy and Arnold also sometimes see Sarah at an outreach clinic in Seneca, which cuts their drive time in half.

After Judy and Arnold learned they both have a hearing loss, they decided to take the leap and purchase digital hearing aid technology. Now, two years later, they're hearing much better and are happy with the results.

"I feel like I am catching the conversation," Judy said. Arnold, who spends a lot of time on the phone for business,



said he hears much better, and isn't missing out on the nuances of important calls.

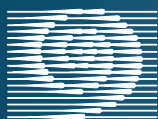
They are both very happy with Dr. Schotte, and agree she's taking great care of them.

"Sarah is easy to work with, very nice and genuinely cares about her patients," Judy said.

Arnold said, "I would recommend Associated Audiologists to anyone with hearing loss. I know there are a lot of choices out there, but Sarah is professional and personable. She really cares about her patients, and is very empathetic. I don't think you can do any better than that."



**To schedule an appointment with Dr. Schotte at the Associated Audiologists Manhattan Clinic, visit [hearingyourbest.com](http://hearingyourbest.com), or call 785-539-7361.**



**ASSOCIATED  
AUDIOLOGISTS**

**We are on a mission:**  
To improve lives through  
comprehensive audiology care.



## Is There an Advantage to Medicare Advantage Plans?

Recently, especially in the Kansas City area, we have seen an increase in the number of patients who have enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. Unfortunately, many individuals do not understand how their plans work, especially as it relates to hearing aids.

**H**ere is some information from the Medicare.gov website that helps further explain the plans.

Medicare Advantage Plans, sometimes called “Part C” or “MA Plans,” are an “all in one” alternative to original Medicare. They are offered by private insurance companies approved by Medicare. If you join a Medicare Advantage Plan, you still have Medicare. These “bundled” plans include Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) and Medicare Part B (medical insurance), and usually Medicare prescription drug coverage (Part D).

Medicare pays a fixed amount for your care each month to companies offering Medicare Advantage plans. These companies must follow rules set by Medicare. Each Medicare Advantage plan can charge different out-of-pocket costs. Please be aware that even if you subscribe to a plan that says it charges zero premiums, YOU still have to pay your monthly Medicare premiums.

That means the insurance company you purchase this plan from receives a monthly amount to take you on as a patient. This is paid by Medicare. PLUS, you have to pay them your Medicare premiums, instead of paying them to Medicare. Depending on how your plan is structured, you may not have to pay any additional premiums (where the zero premiums claim comes in). Or, you may have additional premiums on top of your Medicare premiums.

Medicare Advantage plans can also have different rules for how you access services, like whether you need a referral to see a specialist. Or, if you have to go to doctors, facilities, or suppliers that belong to the plan for non-emergency or non-urgent care.

These rules are subject to change each year.

Medicare Advantage plans cover all Medicare services. Some plans also offer extra coverage, like vision, hearing and dental coverage. This is where things can get complicated regarding hearing aids.

Traditional Medicare DOES NOT cover the cost of hearing aids, and even though some Medicare Advantage plans claim to offer a hearing aid benefit, it may not be that helpful.

“After working with several of these plans, we have found that the hearing aid benefit often covers only a low-end hearing aid that, in many cases, is less sophisticated than some of the older hearing aid technology our patients are already wearing,” explained Tim Steele, PhD, President and CEO, Associated Audiologists.

“In other cases, the plans are so complicated or restrictive in terms of

providers or treatment choices, the hearing aid benefit turns out to be of little benefit at all.”

For patients who have purchased these plans thinking they now have coverage, not only for hearing aids, but other services, like dental or vision, this can be very frustrating.

“Before you sign up for an advantage plan, check the benefits very carefully as they relate to all your health-related services,” Dr. Steele said. “For hearing aids, call our clinics and we will check the benefits to see if they would be helpful for you.”

If you signed up for an advantage plan and want to switch back to traditional Medicare, you can do so during the next open enrollment period.

“Ultimately, many patients have been confused by the ‘zero premium’ claim these companies make,” Dr. Steele said. “You still have to pay your traditional Medicare premiums, plus you may have to pay an additional plan premium, and the so-called hearing aid benefit might not amount to much. This is definitely a case of ‘there’s no such thing as a free lunch!’”

### How to File a Consumer Complaint

Increasingly, patients believe they have insurance benefits that cover the cost of care, only to have the claim denied. If you believe a claim has been wrongly denied, you can file a claim complaint.

#### In Kansas

The Insurance Commissioner’s Consumer Assistance Division assists Kansas insurance consumers. To file a consumer complaint against an insurance company/agent/agency, visit <https://www.ksinsurance.org/department/complaint.php> and you will be taken to the Kansas online complaint form.

#### In Missouri

Under Missouri law, you have the right to appeal the insurance company’s decision to deny your treatment. This is an opportunity for you or your provider to give additional information to your insurance company or clear up any miscommunications about your treatment.

You can find information on how to file a claim on the Missouri Department of Insurance website at: <https://insurance.mo.gov/consumers/health/externalreviewprocess.php>.



Dr. Jacobson

"In the ever-evolving healthcare landscape, clinical supervision provides a one-on-one relationship with student-clinicians as they learn to connect the dots between their education and their clinical practice."

— Dana Jacobson, Au.D.

## Clinical Supervision at Associated Audiologists

You may have noticed that your audiologist is often working with doctoral student-clinicians. Associated Audiologists has a long history of providing clinical supervision to students at local and regional universities.

**T**hese students are working toward their doctorate in audiology (Au.D.) degree, and can be at various points in their education. The final portion of a doctorate in audiology is a year-long, full-time, clinical placement called an externship.

"Education is an integral part of the mission and core values of Associated Audiologists, so it easily extends to offering education to others," says Dana Jacobson, Au.D. Dr. Jacobson serves as the practice's student education coordinator.

"In the ever-evolving healthcare landscape, clinical supervision provides a one-on-one relationship with student-clinicians as they learn to connect the dots between their education and their clinical practice," she says.

"We appreciate your willingness to allow our students to be a part of your appointment. It is a critical part of their education," Dr. Jacobson adds. Your appointments will always be scheduled with an audiologist and you have the opportunity to choose whether a student attends. Please let your provider know if you prefer your appointments be conducted without doctoral student-clinicians.

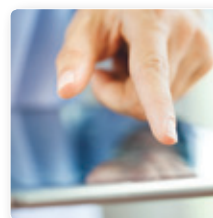
For 2020-21, we are pleased to announce that Karly White will be joining us as an extern. Karly is a doctor of audiology student from the University of Kansas Medical Center. She completed her bachelor of arts degree in speech-language-hearing from the University of Kansas in 2013.

Karly and Dr. Jacobson recently traveled to Antigua, Guatemala with the Medical Missions Foundation to provide hearing healthcare to patients in need. Outside the clinic, you can find Karly working on DIY projects, antiques, spending time with friends, or at her family's lake house in the summer, wake- and paddle-boarding with her niece and nephew.



Karly White  
Associated Audiologists extern

**Audiologists  
are  
"ear-resistible!"**



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conversation!**



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

## STAFF NEWS

### Kim Celebrates 25 Years!

**Kim**, Senior Accounting Coordinator, celebrated her 25th work anniversary with Associated Audiologists earlier this year. Dr. Steele and his wife, Julie, treated Kim, her husband, Dr. Wise and Carody Wise to an anniversary celebration. We are extremely grateful for the loyalty and expertise that Kim has provided the practice over the years. Thank you Kim!

### Dr. Baldwin Supports Legislative Day



**Stacey Baldwin, Au.D.**, participated before the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Legislative Day in Topeka, Kansas. She served as a legislative mentor to student member, Mae Ding, who is in her second year of the master's program in speech-language pathology at the University of Kansas.

Dr. Baldwin attended several meetings with state representatives and senators, as well as the insurance commissioner on issues that directly affect patient care.

Dr. Baldwin coordinates the staff's efforts for all local and national legislative issues that pertain to our patients, providers, practice and the profession of audiology. She represents Associated Audiologists on special committees at both the local and national level.

### Knit More Now!

It's not too soon to start knitting red scarves for our annual Red Scarf drive. Since 2015, our patients and staff have contributed more than 200 hand-made red scarves to the Red Scarf Project, a multi-faceted charity program that benefits foster youth once they "age out" of the system and go to college.

Scarves are due Dec. 1, 2020 and can be dropped off at any of our seven clinics. **Sarah Mediavilla, Au.D.**, audiologist, is coordinating the collection of scarves this year. For more information, feel free to contact Dr. Mediavilla at our Prairie Village Clinic, 913-262-5855.



### COVID-19 Response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Associated Audiologists team is carefully following infection prevention guidelines from the CDC and the state health authorities. In-clinic visits require patients to complete a health screening questionnaire, use of a mask or cloth face covering, and social distancing.

Services during the pandemic include:

- Urgent in-clinic appointments for diagnosis, hearing aid fittings, sudden hearing loss, wax removal and vertigo/dizziness
- Curbside drop-off/pick-up for hearing aid repairs by appointment
- Phone or email assistance/consultations
- Shipping for repaired hearing aids, batteries, accessories and supplies

Clinic days and hours of operation vary by location due to the pandemic. So that we can determine the best way to help you, please call the clinic where we see you to verify staff availability before coming in. Stay safe and healthy!

### Happy 25th Wedding Anniversary

#### Tim and Julie Steele

are celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary this summer. The couple met in May 1994 in the Olathe schools when they were both doing their clinical and teaching requirements for master's work.

Dr. Steele was an audiology student doing his school clinical rounds with the district's Developmental Learning Center, where Julie was a para-professional and working on her master's degree in special education.

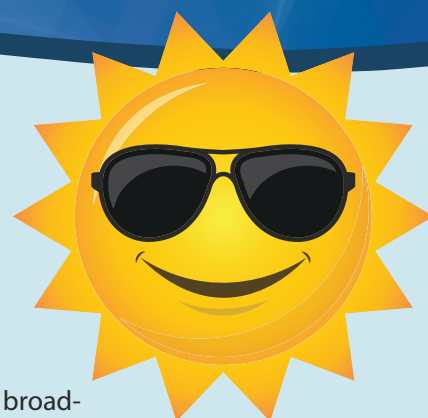
They were married on July 1, 1995 at Old Mission United Methodist Church, with the reception at Lake Quivira. Dr. Steele lived at Old Mission Church when he was a student in KU Medical Center's audiology program.

Today, Dr. Steele is the President and CEO of Associated Audiologists, and Julie is the practice's director of operations. They have four children, Bo, Meg, Caroline, and Kate. Like many of you, the family has been adjusting to the new "normal" during the COVID-19 pandemic.





# Here Comes the Sun!



Though we don't treat skin cancer at Associated Audiologists, we do examine all aspects of patients' ears, and in doing so, often discover potential skin cancers on the ears.

That's because most skin cancers develop on skin exposed to the sun, and many people just haven't been careful about protecting their ears from sun damage over the years.

Typically, skin cancers can be seen or felt long before they become a problem. Most of these are classified as basal or squamous cell skin cancers. Symptoms include:

- > Flat, firm, pale or yellow areas, similar to a scar
- > Growths, lumps or raised reddish patches that might be itchy
- > Small, pink or red, translucent, shiny, pearly bumps, which might have blue, brown, or black areas
- > Open sores (which may have oozing or crusted areas) that don't heal, or that heal and then come back
- > Rough or scaly red patches, which might crust or bleed
- > Wart-like growths

If we see an area on your ears that we think looks suspicious, we'll recommend you see your primary care provider or a dermatologist to have the spot checked out. Often, you can't see these areas on your own ears, so it helps when someone else looks.

In the meantime, most skin cancers are preventable. To protect yourself:

- > Avoid the sun during the middle of the day, usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

- > Wear sunscreen year-round. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, even on cloudy days. Apply sunscreen generously, and reapply every two hours—or more often if you're swimming or perspiring. Use a generous amount of sunscreen on all exposed skin, including your lips, the entire ear pinna, the tips of your ears, and the backs of your hands and neck.
- > Wear protective clothing. Sunscreens don't provide complete protection from UV rays. A broad-brimmed hat provides more protection than a baseball cap or visor does.
- > Don't forget sunglasses that provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays.
- > Avoid tanning beds.
- > Be aware of sun-sensitizing medications. Some common prescription and over-the-counter drugs, including antibiotics, can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.
- > With the help of mirrors, check your face, neck, ears and scalp regularly. Report any changes to your doctor.

Remember, if we find something we think is suspicious during your hearing evaluation, we'll recommend you schedule an appointment with a dermatologist or your primary care provider to get it checked out. Early intervention is critical in reducing the risks associated with these skin cancers.

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