

# Hearing Your Best

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INFORMATION FROM

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

## PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

# "Don't Wait to Get Help with Your Hearing!"

— Randi Cole, 2019 Mrs. Kansas United States

It was Thanksgiving 2016 when Randi Cole first experienced hearing loss. Just 41 years old at the time, she'd had a bad cold, and chalked up the fact that she couldn't hear out of her left ear to a nasty virus.

"I went to my doctor and he started me on an antibiotic, but that didn't help," she said. Even after being referred to a subspecialist who treated her with steroid injections, her hearing loss continued.

"The hearing test showed my hearing loss was pretty severe in my left ear, but I thought I could get by without a hearing aid," she said.

And Randi did get by, continuing her career as a trainer in the crop insurance industry, and as a wife and a stepmom to two teenage daughters. She even competed in and won the 2019 Mrs. Kansas United States pageant.

"I had never competed in a pageant before, but it was a bet from my husband, and I decided to try it," Randi said. "When I won, I decided I would make hearing loss my platform, working with the Hearing Aid Project through Hearing Charities of America so that I could help others who couldn't afford hearing aids."

Ironically, though Randi worked hard to shine a spotlight on this important cause, the one thing she didn't do was get a hearing aid for herself.

"I'm kind of stubborn," Randi admitted. "My hearing loss was affecting me professionally and in my personal relationships with my husband and stepdaughters. I started withdrawing from social gatherings, declining invitations I normally would have accepted because of the background

noise. I did a lot of smiling and nodding, but I didn't really understand what people were saying."

### Dizziness Motivates Action

Unrelated to Randi's hearing loss, in April 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, she began experiencing extreme bouts of dizziness.

"I remember in one instance I was standing in our living room with my family and I had to grab onto the couch to steady myself," she said. "I felt like I was on one of those tilt-a-whirl rides at a carnival. I called my doctor and he referred me to Associated Audiologists."

Danielle Dorner, Au.D., dizziness and balance specialist, performed a comprehensive battery of tests using state-of-the-art equipment to evaluate Randi's equilibrium system.

She diagnosed Randi with benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, or BPPV. The most common cause of vertigo, BPPV is related to the microscopic calcium carbonate particles commonly found in the inner ear. These particles can become displaced and move into one of the ear's semicircular canals where they do not belong. Most people with BPPV experience brief, intense episodes of vertigo that happen when they change positions.

During treatment, Dr. Dorner performed a noninvasive repositioning procedure to clear the particles out of the ear's semi-circular canal and place them back into the part of the inner ear where they belong.



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# Hearing Your Best



## Hear Here...During COVID-19

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

I'm pleased to share another newsletter with you as we continue helping patients, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also recognizing the 35th anniversary of Associated Audiologists, Inc., and never could have anticipated a year quite like this. It certainly remains an unusual time. Instead of referring to things as a "new normal," I prefer to think of it as the new "in-between" normal. We are all looking forward to a return to whatever "normal" will look like, hopefully sooner than later.

I want to use this forum to express my gratitude. The amazing team at Associated Audiologists has demonstrated strength, courage, and sacrifice after everything changed so abruptly in March. Our staff is keeping our doors open, developing and adapting to changing protocols, constantly cleaning/disinfecting, working tirelessly to keep everyone safe, and remaining positive through it all. A special thank you to Dr. Stacey Baldwin and Dr. Dana Jacobson who have assisted with the many protocols implemented for everyone's health and safety.

Many of us have cancelled travel, withdrawn from weddings or celebrations, and made difficult family decisions knowing it could put our patients and colleagues at risk if we did otherwise. I'm incredibly proud of our team.

However, life hasn't stood still. We have had many things happening, including new babies to welcome, weddings and graduations to celebrate, and even military deployments. Congratulations to Dr. Sarah Schotte and Dr. Travis Hopkins Williams who are expecting additions to their families, as well

as to Dr. Bailey Moderson who graduated, started a new position with the practice and got married all during a pandemic! And let's not forget Dr. David Paul, who will be on military deployment with the Army Reserves for 13 months starting in October. We are grateful for your service Dr. Paul!

As I look forward to a time when the pandemic is behind us, I typed a quick poem, hoping that we all emerge from this challenging time stronger and better.

In the year 2020, a new virus came along,  
The illness took some and others with prolong.  
People, concerned, hid for a while,  
Donned masks to be safe, tried to smile.

We learned to read eyes, use kind simple gestures  
to reach out through Zoom and write more letters.  
There were outcries and unrest like times in the past,  
but the result was different in unity that lasts.

We all blamed the virus for our boredom and pain  
when our hearts were the problem, ourselves to blame.  
A vaccine was developed so fewer would perish.  
New babies arrived, tight hugs we now cherish.

Looking back in hindsight, vision now 2020.  
Sad it happened but grateful hearts now a plenty.  
Take one day at a time, look forward with hope.  
We still have each other, the best way to cope.

## Does COVID-19 Affect Hearing?

Because COVID-19 is so new and research regarding its impact on the human body is limited, it's difficult to know what the long-lasting effects will be on those who contract it.

Recently, however, studies published in highly respected medical journals, such as the American Journal of Otolaryngology, have documented evidence that even those with no symptoms may experience damage to the outer ear hair cells, which could impact hearing.

If you've had COVID-19 and have noticed a change in your hearing, we encourage you to have a comprehensive hearing evaluation, even if you only had mild or no symptoms.



## Reminder!

COVID-19 continues to circulate in the communities we serve. In compliance with CDC recommendations, and for everyone's protection, we are using a health screening questionnaire, temperature checks, and ask that all patients wear a face mask or cloth face covering in our clinics.

**Please call your clinic to learn more or to schedule an appointment.**





## Curbside Care and Drop Boxes are Here to Stay

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Associated Audiologists team implemented two new services that have been so popular, we've decided to keep them.

These include:

- > **Curbside drop-off/pick-up** for hearing aid repairs by scheduled appointment. A staff member can come to your car to pick your hearing aids up, and will return them while you wait.
- > **After-hours drop boxes** are located at all of our clinics in case you need to leave your hearing aids for service or repairs when the clinic isn't open. Please call to confirm drop-off hours.

We also still offer Urgent Ear Clinic repairs and service by appointment to keep your hearing aids functioning.

**Call the clinic where we see you  
so we can determine the best way to help you,  
and to verify staff availability before coming in.**



## "Don't Wait to Get Help..."

*continued from page 1*

After just two treatments, Randi's BPPV was completely resolved. With that problem taken care of, Dr. Dorner suggested she might talk with Dana Jacobson, Au.D., about her hearing loss and possible treatment options.

Randi agreed. Dr. Jacobson confirmed she has a severe hearing loss in her left ear, and recommended a Widex Evoke 440 hearing aid to improve her hearing.

### Don't Wait!

"I was still reluctant to wear a hearing aid, but my husband reminded me that I had done a lot to encourage others to get help with their hearing loss, and that I needed to do this for myself. He was right," Randi said.

After Dr. Jacobson fit Randi with her new hearing aid, she couldn't believe all she had been missing. "I am a nature lover and a bird watcher. I could hear the birds singing again, and on walks, I could even hear the sound of my footsteps. I had forgotten what that was like," she said.

Today, Randi isn't struggling to hear conversations at home or at work any longer.

"I've had my new hearing aid for several months now," Randi said. "It matches my hair color and is almost invisible. I show it off every chance I get! It's been a Godsend. I can't believe I waited so long to get help!"



Dr. Jacobson helps Randi Cole, Mrs. Kansas 2019, "hear her best."

She credits Dr. Jacobson and Dr. Dorner with going above and beyond the call of duty to assist her.

"They both did such a good job of getting to the bottom of my issues," Randi said. "They made me feel really comfortable. No question was off limits. I couldn't have asked for a better experience. They were great!"

In fact, Randi is doing so well, she'll compete in November as Ms. Elite Johnson County United States Agriculture in the Kansas state pageant.

Her advice to others on the fence about hearing aids?

"I should have done this sooner. Don't be embarrassed, don't be shy, and don't wait. Don't wait!"

# Hearing Your Best

## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Hearing aid technology continues to evolve, advancing so that you can enjoy every word! Here, the Associated Audiologists team summarizes the latest technology and features you may benefit from.



### Widex Moment

The latest generation of hearing aids from Widex, called Moment, restores the sense of more natural hearing as many people remember it. This is a fundamental shift for general consumers plagued by hearing loss at increasingly younger ages. This technology can be especially beneficial to new hearing aid users or those with mild to moderate hearing loss.

#### Benefits:

- > Location services within the app will pull up a GPS map to show you where your aids were last connected to your phone. This is helpful in locating your hearing aids if you've accidentally pulled them off, when removing a mask, for example.
- > Ability to mute your hearing aid mics to reduce interfering sound when streaming a phone call.
- > Directional focus capability to choose the sounds most important to you. This comes in handy if your grandkids are in the back seat of the car, for example.
- > Lowest soft sound knee point in the industry, which provides you the best access to soft speech sounds.
- > Highest bit rate in the industry, giving you the widest dynamic range for optimal sound quality for all listening situations and music.

### Phonak Paradise

This new processor is designed to improve sound quality and boost gain for soft speech. The wearer can switch between two Bluetooth devices and utilize a "tap control" in some levels of technology to start/stop streaming, answer/end a call, or activate a voice assistant.

#### Benefits:

- > The hearing aid mic used during phone conversations allows for hands-free calling.
- > The tap control (tapping the side of the hearing aid instead of a smaller push button or switch) allows for more user flexibility while streaming.

### ReSound One

This new ReSound product has a third microphone built into the receiver wire that fits in the ear canal. There are two mics on the hearing aid and a third fits in the ear canal, which improves directionality and overall perception.

#### Benefits:

- > May reduce wind noise for some users.
- > Uses the natural ear properties to aid with directional focus.

### Signia CROS/BICROS

The Signia Pure CROS is for patients with single-sided deafness. CROS technology is worn behind the poorer ear to detect sounds coming from that side. It then transmits it to the hearing aid on the other side,

allowing an individual to hear sounds from both sides.

#### Benefits:

- > First CROS product that is also compatible with direct Bluetooth streaming from an iPhone.
- > Delivers brilliant sound and speech from every direction.
- > Rechargeable options also available for some models.

### Roger FM

Roger FM is a state-of-the-art wireless microphone that can help boost hearing aid performance and bridge the understanding gap. It is helpful for all, but especially for those with poor speech clarity, a greater degree of hearing loss, or anyone who needs to hear well from a distance. Now with masks and social distancing, anyone who relied heavily on visual information previously (lip reading), may benefit from this technology, too.



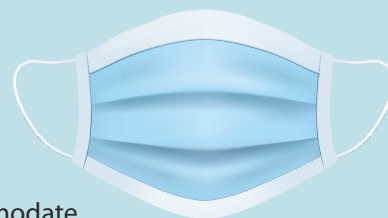
#### Benefits:

- > Improves the volume of the speaker over the competing noise.
- > An option available for most existing hearing aid users as an added accessory with your current hearing aids.
- > Demonstration and demo technology are available by appointment.

**Talk with your audiologist about the latest hearing aid technology options so that we can continue to help you hear your best!**



## Here are Some Tips to Help When Wearing a Mask AND Hearing Aids



**D**uring the COVID-19 pandemic, wearing a face mask or other cloth face covering has become a requirement in our clinic for both our staff and our patients. Based on current evidence and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, it's the best way to reduce the transmission of this virus.

But, wearing a face mask when communicating with someone who has hearing loss can be a challenge in a couple of ways. Probably the most obvious is that the mask covers the mouth, making it difficult for the individual with hearing loss to receive visual cues from the wearer.

These speech reading cues, like lip movements, provide someone with hearing loss with important information when trying to interpret what the other person is saying. In fact, research has shown that those with hearing loss have significant improvement in accuracy of interpreting the spoken word when visual cues are present. Visual cues also may improve hearing in noise.

Face masks also can reduce or muffle the sound from the wearer. Researchers found that a simple face mask can reduce volume from 3 to 4 dB, and an N95 mask can decrease the high frequencies by 12 decibels. A surgical mask also can reduce sound by 12 dB. As a frame of reference, a whisper registers about 20 dB.

Mask usage reduces the intensity of the speaker's voice. Someone with normal hearing could easily experience about a 30% decrease in audibility when listening to someone who is wearing a properly fitted N95 mask. Add background noise and the lack of visual cues, and it becomes obvious that masking can present some unique challenges for those with hearing loss.

Further confounding the problem is that most conversation takes place at about a 3-foot distance. Social distancing recommendations advise keeping at least 6 feet from others. Though this is necessary to help reduce the spread of the virus, doubling the distance in which normal conversations take place reduces the speech signal received by the listener even more.

The result is you may have more problems than usual understanding conversations with friends and family, but even more important, this may be an issue to recognize when visiting health care providers or others who are trying to provide personal counsel, such as an attorney or financial advisor.

How can we accommodate for the combination of masking and social distancing as the "new normal" in our daily routines, and yet hear the important information others are trying to convey? Here are a few important tips:

- > Stand 6 feet apart, but face the other individual when talking.
- > Consider wearing an approved clear face mask to maximize lip/facial cues. There are clear face masks now available on the market, and that we have for sale. These can be very helpful.
- > Speak slowly and clearly.
- > Rephrase rather than just repeat what was not heard.
- > Minimize environmental noises like the air conditioner, fans, etc. These sounds can drown out or muffle speech even more.
- > Be prepared to write answers down to the questions the listener has. This helps minimize communication errors.
- > If you wear hearing aids, ask your audiologist about options to help overcome the "mask" situation. Adjustments may help address the "muffled" effect the mask has on speech, and may help make it easier to hear.
- > If you wear behind-the-ear hearing aids, be careful when removing the elastic straps on the mask so that they don't pull your hearing aids off by accident.

In addition to adjusting your hearing devices for a mask situation, consider talking with an audiologist about a spouse mic/remote mic or FM system that streams the conversation partner's voice directly to the wearer's hearing aids.

The conversation partner simply clips a discreet remote mic onto their clothing, or places it on a table. The individual with hearing loss may or may not need to wear a wireless Bluetooth accessory around their neck, depending upon their hearing aid model. The mic has a 20 to 30-foot range and the mic and receiver work best when they are within sight of one another. It is especially helpful in one-on-one conversations in difficult listening environments, like when wearing masks.

If you are struggling with communicating with others when they are wearing a mask or are stressed by hearing loss, talk with your audiologist.

## STAFF NEWS

### Dr. Moderson to Help with Leavenworth Clinic

**David Paul, Au.D.**, our Leavenworth Clinic audiologist, is also a major in the United States Army Reserve in the Medical Service Corp branch. Dr. Paul has been notified that his unit will be deployed starting in November 2020, and he could be away for up to 13 months. We're very proud of his service and support this important mission.

During Dr. Paul's absence, **Bailey Moderson, Au.D.**, will take care of patients full time in our Leavenworth Clinic.

Dr. Moderson specializes in evaluating and managing hearing loss. She completed her Doctor of Audiology degree with the University of Kansas Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan. Dr. Moderson also performed her externship with Associated Audiologists.

**To schedule an appointment in our Leavenworth Clinic, call 913-682-1870.**



Dr. Paul



Dr. Moderson

### Congratulations to our "Best"

Congratulations to **Danielle Dorner, Au.D.**, for receiving Gold as the Best Audiologist in the Northland in the Courier-Tribune's Best of the Northland readers' poll. Dr. Dorner specializes in caring for patients with dizziness and balance disorders.

Congratulations also are in order for **Dr. Paul**, who was selected the BEST audiologist in Leavenworth in a Leavenworth Times readers' poll. Dr. Paul has consistently been named to this list since he joined the practice.



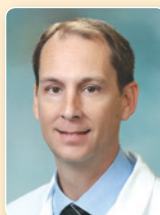
Dr. Dorner



Dr. Paul

### Happy Anniversary!

Congratulations to **David Nissen, Au.D.**, on 22 years with Associated Audiologists! Dr. Nissen is a valuable member of our team who cares for patients in our Prairie Village and Independence Clinics.



Dr. Nissen

### Baby Boom

Two members of the Associated Audiologists team are adding to their families. **Travis Hopkins-Williams, Au.D.**, and his wife, Rachel, are expecting their first child in November 2020. Dr. Hopkins-Williams sees patients at our Independence and Overland Park clinics.

**Sarah Schotte, Au.D.**, and her husband, Preston, also are expecting their first child, due in December 2020. Dr. Schotte cares for patients at our Manhattan clinic. Please join us in wishing them all the best!



### The Celebration Continues

Our Independence Clinic opened one year ago in the Cliffview Professional Building with **Dr. Travis Hopkins Williams** and **Dr. David Nissen** caring for patients, with Kerry assisting them. Congratulations to this team on a successful launch.

We also continue to celebrate our 35th anniversary at Associated Audiologists! We have some special gifts available while supplies last for our loyal patients purchasing new hearing aids.



### Buyer Beware!

Recently, the Kansas Insurance Commissioner issued a warning to consumers that there has been an uptick in the number of complaints due to scams. Here are some to watch out for:

- > "Coronavirus Insurance" is not real. It does not exist. Anyone trying to sell it is trying to scam you.
- > Beware of phone calls where people claim to be from your insurance company. They may even have some of your information. Don't change your policy during these phone calls. Hang up and call your agent.
- > NEVER give out any personal information (Medicare number, Social Security number, credit card number, etc.) to anyone over the phone.



# 5 Ways to Save on Hearing Aids Now

Hearing aids are a significant investment in your health, and one that can be vitally important. But, actually paying for hearing aids can sometimes be more difficult. So let's take a look at some ways you can pay for hearing aids now, AND save money.

**1** Pay cash if you can. If you can't, Associated Audiologists accepts a variety of credit cards. If you have a flexible spending account (FSA) or health saving plan (HSA), hearing aids qualify as an expense. In 2020, FSAs are limited to \$2,750 per year per employee. If you're married, your spouse also can put up to \$2,750 in an FSA with their employer. HSAs don't usually have limits but sometimes the credit card associated with an HSA has a daily maximum use cap.

**2** In most cases, you must use the dollars you've saved in your FSA by the end of the calendar year. In many cases, if you don't use those dollars, you lose them. An HSA doesn't lose the dollars you've saved and rather acts like a savings account used only for health related expenses.

**3** Use your insurance benefits. Insurance coverage for hearing examinations and hearing aids varies from one insurance provider to the next, even from plan to plan under the same insurance company. Check with the clinic where we see you to verify your benefits and explain your options.

**4** Save on your 2020 taxes. Hearing aids are a qualified medical expense if you itemize your medical expenses on your income taxes. Be sure to talk with your tax advisor regarding claiming medical expenses. Additionally, if you purchase hearing aids through Associated Audiologists, they qualify as medical devices and are exempt from sales tax, which may not be the case if you purchase hearing aids through retail outlets.

**5** Check financing options. CareCredit is a convenient, monthly payment program we use at Associated Audiologists. The Wells Fargo Financial National Bank credit card program also provides budget flexibility through a comprehensive range of financing options. These plans usually have a set time frame for repayment which can influence the interest rate you are assessed.

Our staff has the expertise to check and verify your insurance coverage, as well as provide detailed estimates of hearing aid recommendations and costs. We also can provide you with the receipts necessary for reimbursement from your FSA or HSA plan.

**End-of-year appointments fill quickly.  
Call the clinic where we see you today.**



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Hearing Your Best for Life

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## Hearing Your Best

### GET CONNECTED

## Special Promotions on Many Models of Hearing Aid Technology

- \$3,500 a pair for mid-level technology with trade-in (normally \$4,300 to \$4,500 a pair)
- Options available for Bluetooth connectivity
- Includes manufacturer's repair, loss/damage warranty and professional service

*Offer cannot be combined with insurance benefits. Private pay only.  
Offer expires Dec. 31, 2020.*

*Must present coupon to redeem.*

### POWER UP



60 Professional Grade  
Hearing Aid Batteries,  
Guaranteed Fresh

**just \$35** (normally \$38)

*Limit 3, 60-count boxes per patient—180 batteries total.  
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*Must present coupon to redeem.*