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



# Hearing Your Best

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## Mitch Holthus Teams Up with Associated Audiologists to Take His Hearing to the Next Level

Listening to Mitch Holthus call a game for the Kansas City Chiefs is almost as thrilling as watching the game itself. He has the rare ability to capture the nail-biting action on the field, then share his genuine enthusiasm, excitement, and passion for the sport, all with the sound of his voice.

But despite an award-winning broadcasting career that's spanned more than four decades, Mitch recently noticed he was having more trouble than usual hearing the nuances of conversations, and those nuances are important to him. "I realized I just wasn't hearing like I once did," Mitch admitted.

"One of the things I do in my role with the Chiefs is work with their inside production arm," Mitch added. "Except for me, it's staffed mostly by young adults. I call it 'Mitch and the Millennials.' I felt like they were talking in fast, hushed tones. I couldn't always hear them and I felt like I was getting left behind."

In public settings, there were times when he found it hard to follow conversations. On a personal level, it seemed Mitch's two granddaughters also were speaking in soft, muffled tones. "It was like everyone was hearing what they were saying, but I wasn't. And I found myself asking my wife, Tami, to repeat herself a lot."

Recognizing that his hearing had gone from one of his greatest assets to a liability, Mitch knew he needed help. He also knew his colleague, Hall of Fame quarterback and broadcasting legend the late Len Dawson, had been an Associated Audiologists patient.



After scheduling his initial hearing evaluation with the Associated Audiologists team, he began working with Tim Steele, Ph.D., President and CEO.

Mitch's diagnostic hearing evaluation revealed he has a high-frequency sensorineural hearing loss. "Mitch's hearing loss mostly affects high frequencies, which is why he was having problems hearing softer sounds and higher pitched voices," Dr. Steele explained.

### What caused Mitch's hearing loss?

Growing up on a farm near Smith Center, Kansas, Mitch was exposed to loud farm equipment, a common cause of hearing loss. But as a play-by-play announcer, first for the

*Continued on page 3*

## HEAR HERE

Tim Steele, Ph.D.,  
President and CEO

My greatest privilege is serving as an audiologist. As a child, I was enthralled with Helen Keller and I suppose that partly influenced my career. Her memorable words that, "Blindness cuts us off from things while deafness cuts us off from people," has served as an inspiration and motivation in my work treating hearing loss for almost 30 years.

Unfortunately, the time has come to make a tough choice. Many of you are aware that I have been serving dual roles at Associated Audiologists, Inc., as President and CEO, as well as an audiology provider. With these multiple hats, I also direct and mentor our doctoral-level audiology team.

While it is a tremendous honor having your trust as your audiologist, it has become increasingly challenging to juggle my roles effectively as the practice has grown. That is why I have made the very difficult decision to transition out of patient care this summer, focusing fully on my leadership responsibilities.

This change will happen gradually over the next several months. If you have an appointment scheduled with me between now and July, you will likely still be able to see me. After that and during this change, I am recommending you transition your care to one of our highly experienced audiologists.

You can learn more about each audiologist's background and experience at [hearingyourbest.com](https://hearingyourbest.com), but in every case, I want you to know that I would trust my own hearing care and that of my loved ones to any of these outstanding professionals. They truly are the best and I know you will be in very good hands!

I'm not leaving Associated Audiologists. I'll still be very involved in leading the practice. I cannot put into words how much the trust and loyalty you have placed in me and Associated Audiologists over the years has meant.

# Technology Update

## SOUND ASSIST



Even though you may have hearing aids, sometimes there are situations where they could use a boost.

If you wear Widex Moment hearing aids, you're in luck. A new device called **Sound Assist** now can help improve communication in a variety of situations.

Widex Sound Assist is a small square-shaped device that can connect to Widex Moment hearing aids, acting as a remote microphone to stream sound to the individual's hearing aids.

Sound Assist offers:

- ▶ Partner microphone mode – One-to-one conversations with friends and family sound clear wherever they are.
- ▶ Table microphone mode – Hear important meetings, lively dinners, and group conversations more easily.
- ▶ Hands-free phone calls – Great sounding calls on the go.
- ▶ Streaming mode – Audio streaming from a connected Bluetooth device to your hearing aid.
- ▶ Remote control for Widex Moment Bluetooth hearing aids – Lets the individual control their sound easily.

### Roger FM

Another option to help boost hearing aid performance and bridge the understanding gap is Roger FM. This wireless microphone has been available for a couple of years and 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. It has the capability to work with a larger variety of Widex and Phonak hearing aid models.

**To learn more about Widex Sound Assist or Phonak Roger FM, talk with your audiologist.**

Kansas State Wildcats and then for the Chiefs, he's faced an occupational risk few others have.

"I have been in some of the loudest stadiums in the nation, which I'm sure put me at risk for hearing loss," Mitch said. He's also done basketball play-by-play for sports powerhouses ESPN, Fox, the Big 12, Missouri Valley, and the SEC.

Mitch's job involves wearing headphones that stream the action on the field or court, his producer's directions, stats, injuries, and other critical information directly to his ears.

"From my perspective, Mitch's ability to process sound from multiple sources is almost super-human," Dr. Steele said. "Most of us have difficulty listening to the TV and a spouse or family member at the same time. I don't know how anyone can take that much information in, make sense of it and call the game, all while entertaining us. I was just floored when Mitch explained how he uses his hearing."

### **A custom solution for a unique hearing challenge**

Before scheduling an appointment with Associated Audiologists, Mitch acknowledged the stigma attached to the possibility that he has a hearing loss and would need hearing aids. "I thought, 'Am I getting old?' 'Am I going to turn into my grandpa?'"

But then he realized not being able to hear was a far worse fate than wearing hearing aids. "Mitch

understood that untreated hearing loss is associated with other health conditions related to aging, like dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and he's very health conscious," Dr. Steele said.

“

Meeting and working  
with Dr. Steele and  
Associated Audiologists  
has been a Godsend.  
These new hearing aids  
are well worth the  
investment. Most people  
can't even tell I'm wearing  
them but they make  
all the difference  
in the world for me!

— Mitch Holthus

"Dr. Steele used his expertise to pinpoint my exact hearing loss," Mitch said. "He was so empathetic, so thorough. He treats each person as an individual. Your situation is different from mine, but he can help us both."

After discussing his unique hearing needs and exploring his options with Dr. Steele, Mitch decided to try Widex

Moment completely-in-the-canal (CIC) hearing aids. These tiny state-of-the-art devices are practically invisible, helping Mitch stay on top of his game in the broadcast booth, in public settings, and at home.

"One thing that struck me about Mitch was that he didn't want to be unplugged from life," Dr. Steele said. "I admire him for embracing his hearing loss and tackling it."

Now Mitch describes his hearing as nothing short of profound.

"Dr. Steele used scientific advancements to program these hearing aids just for my hearing loss. I told him I was even hearing paper crackling," Mitch said. "He explained that these new hearing aids have helped activate sounds in my brain that I haven't heard for years and years."

In public settings, Mitch said his new hearing aids have restored his confidence and have become an important asset. "I have gone from not being able to understand what someone's saying, to hearing and participating in conversations again."

In his personal life, Mitch said his new hearing aids are "must-haves" when he's with his granddaughters and family. "I don't want to miss out, especially with them," he added.

And if you happen to catch Mitch broadcasting a Chiefs game, and hear his signature call, "Touchdown Kan—zzzz City!," rest assured he's not missing one moment of the action, and neither are you.



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



# Why Is Everyone on TV Mumbling?

Picture this. You and your sweetie snuggle up on the couch with your popcorn and favorite beverages, ready to watch the latest release on Netflix. But a few minutes into the movie, you both have puzzled looks on your faces. You turn to your partner and ask, "What did he say?" Your partner looks confused too and replies, "I'm not sure."

One of you has hearing loss and wears hearing aids and one of you doesn't. Surely one of you should be able to hear what you think sounds like the "muddy" movie dialogue. Right?

Wrong. This is an all-too-common scenario that plays out in living rooms every day, and not just among older couples with hearing loss. According to a survey conducted by Vox, about 57% of YouTube viewers feel like they need to use subtitles to understand what the characters in the video they're watching are saying. As an aside, only 2% of the individuals surveyed identified as being deaf or hard of hearing.

## So, what's going on?

Like many things in our modern world, the answer is complicated and technology plays a big part in this issue. For example, microphones were originally large and actors had to talk into them to be heard. Today's microphones are smaller, wireless and more of them are used to capture performances. The good news is these smaller microphones allow actors to be more natural in their performances. They can speak softer and the mic still picks up what they are saying.

But natural sound doesn't always equate to sound you can understand, or intelligible speech. Some actors just naturally mumble, and if that's the case, a dialogue editor may have to make their speech more intelligible. But even with an editor's help, some dialogue can be hard to understand and you can only turn the volume up so loud before it becomes distorted.

Plus, the videos we watch on television or on our phones aren't sound mixed for such environments. They're mixed for state-of-the-art theatres with 3-D sound systems. Then, someone has to take that sound and adapt it to small media, like your television.

This is complicated by the fact that today's televisions are very thin and have tiny speakers in order to fit in this format. These speakers are also usually on the back of the TV, meaning the sound is probably being projected into the TV or a wall rather than being projected into a room at listeners.



All this makes the dialogue in your favorite programs harder than ever to hear and understand. Fortunately, there are some things you can do.

First, and probably easiest, be sure closed captioning or subtitles are turned on on your TV. They can help clarify exactly what's being said in the program you're watching. Closed captioning allows you to hear and read speech on the television screen, making the dialogue available for everyone in the family. All digital televisions with screens greater than 13" must offer closed captioning per the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This is a great option for people with hearing loss because it may already exist on your television. If you haven't used it previously, there should be a button on your remote control with a "CC" icon. Typically, you can switch it off and on.

Second, you can buy additional speakers for your TV to help boost the sound in the room. These are often referred to as "sound bars" if they are long and narrow to sit in front

## ADVANTAGES TO BLUETOOTH TECHNOLOGY

- ▶ Hearing aids equipped with Bluetooth technology can receive a signal directly from a TV device, smartphone or another Bluetooth-enabled device directly to the hearing aids. The hearing aids just need to be paired with the transmitting device. Then, with the press of a button, wireless streaming can occur.
- ▶ By delivering the sound directly to the individual's hearing aids, the overall sound quality improves, and background noise in the room is reduced.
- ▶ The individual with hearing loss can control the volume they personally hear independent of the volume of the television's speakers.
- ▶ Family members with different degrees of hearing ability can enjoy television together.

of your television. There are also speakers that can be utilized close to where you are sitting.

Third, if you wear hearing aids, have your audiologist check them to be sure they're working at peak performance.

In addition, some patients' hearing needs an extra "boost" so they can fully enjoy television programming without blasting the rest of the family out of the house. The good news is that there are some television-specific assistive listening devices that not only can help the patient hear their favorite programs, but can make the experience more enjoyable for others in the home.

More specifically, TV listening devices include those that stream sound directly through the hearing aids utilizing a Bluetooth connection or those that boost sound using headphones. Many of the major hearing aid brands, such as Widex, ReSound and Phonak, offer devices that connect to their hearing aids using Bluetooth technology or frequency-modulated (FM) systems.

Intermediary streaming devices often use an FM or Bluetooth signal and then send it to the hearing aids via another wireless connection.

If you don't wear hearing aids but have trouble hearing the television, TV earphones may be an option. One popular brand is TV Ears. These types of devices include a transmitting base which plugs directly into the TV's headphone jack. The listener wears a headset. TV Ears uses infrared light to transmit the sound signal from the transmission base to the earphones. The individual wearing the headset must position the base within the line of sight of the headset at all times so that the infrared signal can communicate with the headset. There are controls on the headset so the wearer may adjust the volume and tone of the sound delivered to their ears. One transmission base can deliver signals to several headsets, which can be controlled independently by each user.

So, if you've been thinking everyone on TV is mumbling, you may be right. It seems there may be more mumbling going on than in the past. But if you wear hearing aids, be sure to talk with your audiologist. There are several good options available to help you enjoy television programming.

**Schedule an appointment with a doctoral-level audiologist.**

## Legislative Link

**Stacey Baldwin, Au.D.**, attended the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (KSHA) Legislative Day at the state capitol in Topeka in January. Dr. Baldwin, along with other audiologists, speech pathologists and students, spent the day educating representatives on issues concerning speech, language and hearing. KSHA and its lobby group, Capitol Strategies, works year-round protecting the profession and patients through advocacy efforts. Currently, our audiologists are working with a committee which hopes to add hearing benefits to the Essential Health Benefits for the state of Kansas. Our goal is to advocate for benefit options that provide access to quality services and hearing aids for all ages and degrees of hearing loss.



## Start Knitting!

Since 2015, our patients and staff have contributed more than 400 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. The organization accepts donations of hand-knitted or crocheted red scarves, which are given to the college-age students on Valentine's Day each year.

If you'd like to help out, scarves are due this year by Dec. 1, 2023, and can be dropped off at any of our eight clinics. If you miss the Dec. 1 deadline, don't worry. We'll continue to collect scarves throughout the year and will include yours with our next donation.

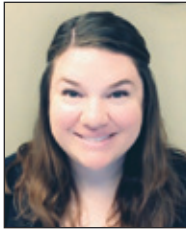
Associated Audiologists also is assisting with this project by covering the cost of shipping for the scarves. If you would like to help, but do not knit or crochet, you can send notes of encouragement that can be included with the scarves.

Associated Audiologists also has been a sponsor of a local not-for-profit organization called YouthThrive that helps youth who have just aged out of the foster care system in our local communities transition to independent living. The goal is to reduce the associated risk factors that these young people can fall prey to.

**For more information, call 913-498-2827. You also can find project details and patterns at: <https://www.fc2success.org/programsmentoring-and-support/red-scarf-project/>.**

## Welcome Laura Sweigart

**Laura Sweigart** has joined the Associated Audiologists Leavenworth Clinic as their new administrative assistant. Laura resides in Potter, Kansas, with her husband Derek and two children, Brianna, 14, and Axton, 6. The family also has a one-eyed American Staffordshire terrier named Lola.



Before joining Associated Audiologists, Laura worked at Anderson Orthodontics in downtown Leavenworth, and prior to that she was employed at Henry Leavenworth 453 School District.

Laura enjoys spending time with family and friends. Her hobbies include going to ice hockey games, cookouts, watching movies, playing cards and working out at the gym.

"What I enjoy most about working with Associated Audiologists is how happy it makes our patients to be able to hear clearly and seeing their smiles after a hearing aid fitting," she said. Be sure to welcome Laura to the Leavenworth Clinic!

## Congratulations Andrew Morris

Congratulations to **Andrew Morris** who is graduating from the University of Maryland with his Doctorate in Audiology in May. Andrew served as one of our fourth-year externs this past year, helping care for patients in our Overland Park Clinic. He is returning to Maryland with his wife and daughter to be closer to family. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors!

## Baby Love

Congratulations to **Bailey Moderson, Au.D.**, and her husband Phil, who recently welcomed a baby girl, Augustine Lynn, into the world. Dr. Moderson, who cared for patients in our Leavenworth Clinic, left the practice at the end of 2022 to spend more time with family.



## Welcome New Staff

**Abigail Kelly** will officially join the Associated Audiologists team in May following her graduation from Missouri State University, Springfield, Missouri, with her Doctorate in Audiology degree.

Abigail earned her Bachelor of Science in Speech and Hearing Sciences from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois. She performed her fourth-year externship with the Associated Audiologists team.

Her special expertise is in assessing hearing loss and advanced hearing aid technology. She enjoys interacting with patients, building long-term relationships with them.

Abigail has previously worked as a graduate student clinician. Originally from Moline, Illinois, she became interested in audiology while completing her undergraduate degree in speech and hearing sciences.

"What I like about audiology is the opportunity to work with people to improve their lives through better communication while getting to know them one-on-one," Abigail said.

"What I love about Associated Audiologists is that they always put best practice first," she added. "Every patient leaves the clinic having received the best service possible. I'm excited to be a part of a practice that has such an outstanding reputation and rightly so. Patients always come first here."

Abigail now resides in the Kansas City area where she enjoys exploring the local food scene and spending time with friends. After this past year, she's become a football fan and considers herself an "honorary Chief."



**Ally Martin** recently joined the Associated Audiologists team as its first-ever audiology assistant. Ally graduated from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, with her Bachelor's Degree in Speech-Language-Hearing Disorders in May 2022. She also has minors in American Sign Language (ASL) and applied behavioral science. In November 2022, Ally became certified as an audiology assistant.

In this role, Ally is responsible for assisting the audiologists primarily at the Overland Park Clinic. She helps perform maintenance on patients' hearing aids at clinic appointments, as well as assisting with hearing aids brought in through Urgent Ear. She also helps with other administrative duties.

Ally became interested in a career in speech-language pathology and audiology after her own experience with hearing loss. "I am lucky that I was born the same year hospitals began performing routine hearing screenings," Ally said. After being diagnosed with a hearing loss as a newborn, she was initially treated at Children's Mercy Kansas City.

In middle school, her care transitioned to Stacey Baldwin, Au.D., Associated Audiologists, who she credits with not only taking great care of her hearing, but inspiring her to work in the field.

In high school, Ally volunteered as a student ambassador for Hear2HelpKC, a non-profit organization that helps children afford hearing aids. In college, she assisted the organization with its social media.

Ally grew up in and resides in Overland Park with her golden doodle, Dany, and her Yorkie, Roo. She enjoys going on walks with her dogs and reading.





## Why do I have itchy ears and what can I do about it?

Having “itchy ears” is a common problem we see in our patients. There are lots of reasons why our ears might itch. Sometimes it’s as simple as dry skin or wax in our ear canals, but it can also be the result of contact dermatitis or seborrheic dermatitis; an infection; irritation from hearing aids or earbuds; or allergies.

In some cases, the itching occurs in the outer part of the ear, while in others, it may be deep inside the ear canal.

For most people, itchy ears can be treated with over-the-counter options. At Associated Audiologists we offer several new solutions that our team has evaluated and found to be very effective.

If the problem is caused by an infection or other medical condition, you will need to see a medical specialist. An antibiotic or other medication may be necessary to clear up the problem. You may be referred to an ear, nose and throat specialist or a dermatologist for treatment.

Tips to reduce itchy ears include:

- ▶ Don’t scratch your ears. The more you scratch, the more you’ll itch and you run the risk of infecting your ears with an unclean object, like your fingernails.
- ▶ Don’t put water or other liquids in your ears, including shampoos and soaps.



- ▶ Don’t overclean your ears.
- ▶ Don’t use cotton swabs, bobby pins, or ear candles to clean your ears or remove earwax. You could scratch or damage the sensitive skin in the ears.
- ▶ Do wash your hands before handling your hearing aids or earbuds.
- ▶ Do wash your outer ear with a warm washcloth, then dry with a soft, clean towel.
- ▶ Do continue to wear your hearing aids unless otherwise instructed by your audiologist or healthcare professional.

Talk with your audiologist if you experience “itchy ears.” We’ll be glad to take a look in your ears to determine the possible cause, and can make recommendations for one of the new treatment options that we carry in our clinics specifically for this problem. If needed, we can make a referral to a medical specialist.

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## Accessibe

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