



Hearing Your Best

Fall 2023 • Vol. 23, Issue 2

Common Backgrounds Connect Mitch Holthus and Dr. Steele

For both Mitch Holthus, Play-by-Play Announcer for the Kansas City Chiefs, and Tim Steele, Ph.D., President and CEO of Associated Audiologists, shared connections are important.

So, when Mitch went to his first appointment with Dr. Steele to discuss his hearing, he was pleasantly surprised to find that the two had more in common than the typical doctor-patient relationship. They shared the unique experience of growing up on farms in rural Kansas, and much more.



Life on the Farm ...

Mitch grew up on a farm 10 miles northwest of Smith Center, Kan., near the Kansas/Nebraska state line. There, work was hard and days were long, with his family raising chickens, hogs, wheat and milo.

Dr. Steele also grew up on his family's farm near Waterville, Kan., about two hours from Smith Center. His family raised about 120 head of cattle, plus a rotation of crops, including soybeans, alfalfa, wheat and milo.

"When you grow up where Tim and I did, family is strong and hard work is just part of the daily culture," Mitch said. "We have so much in common, it's almost as if we are related."

Both men attended small-town elementary, middle and high schools where they also had similar experiences. "I attended Smith Center and Tim went to Valley Heights High School," Mitch said.

Tim's father, Charles Steele, not only farmed, but at one time was the high school science teacher and football coach at North Central High School in the Morrowville, Kan., area.

"After Tim and I met, I became very interested in his father and started to dig into his past," Mitch said. "He coached the last 11-man team in North Central High School's history. He left quite a footprint on the school's athletic history."

Though Dr. Steele's father passed away several years ago, he said he was touched by Mitch's interest in his career as a football coach. "Mitch came in for one of his appointments and started recapping my dad's final season at North Central, then he began announcing the last game of the year, which was quite a nail-biter," Dr. Steele said. "I wish I had recorded it on my phone. My family would have loved it! Mitch's touching ability to recapture the excitement of that game was inspiring."

Wildcat Connection

Following graduation from high school, both men attended Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kan. There, Mitch earned degrees in broadcast journalism and business,

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HEAR HERE



Tim Steele, Ph.D.,
President and CEO

I recently read *The Book of Charlie* by David Von Drehle, who recorded stories, experiences and life lessons from his friendship with Dr. Charlie White. He actually wrote the book as a gift to his children to help impart guidance for the journey of life. Dr. White was a noted Kansas City physician and anesthesiologist. I had the pleasure of knowing him and I can say that the book is true to his character.

Though Charlie was born in 1905 and was 109 years old when he passed, the shared wisdom of his life rings true today more than ever. This includes the important principles of: do the right thing; work hard; spread joy; take a chance; and enjoy wonder. I remain in awe of the significant changes that Charlie's generation witnessed and admire how he personally embraced change. Like Dr. White, my son Bo will be specializing in anesthesia and is a self-taught saxophone player. I gave my book to Bo with a portion of the note below:

"Bo, this book has great advice for approaching and living life but I think it's summed up with the simple words, "Do the right thing." I trust there will be ups and downs in your life and you will experience many changes throughout your career in medicine. Be open to change and keep your faith strong. You'll be just fine. Love you, Dad."

As a healthcare business, we strive to operate with a focus on doing the right thing. That takes deliberate effort. As a Rotarian, I often lean on the Rotary Four-Way Test when faced with decisions: 1. Is it the truth? 2. Is it fair to all concerned? 3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships? 4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned? I can't tell you the number of times this has helped us at critical junctures for positive resolution.

As a patient or family/friend of Associated Audiologists, Inc., it is my hope that you've experienced this important aspect of our company culture. Living according to these ideals, especially to do the right thing, is an important goal for all of us. Clearly, Charlie found these simple but sound principles beneficial during his amazing 109 years of life.

PATIENT TESTIMONIAL

How Hearing Aids Help Juanita Gnip Live Her Best Life

At 105 years old, Juanita Gnip knows how important it is to hear and participate in conversations with others. A life-long resident of Leavenworth, she enjoyed good hearing until she reached the century mark.

"At that point, I could barely hear unless I was very close to the person or I could read their lips," Juanita said. That's when David Paul, Au.D., fit her with two in-the-ear hearing aids that improved her life immensely. Last year, she moved in with her daughter, Arlene Perry, and started seeing Jonathan York, Au.D., at our Northland Clinic, which is closer to Arlene's home.



A self-described hard worker, Juanita was a cosmetologist for 40 years, then volunteered at Cushing Memorial Hospital until it closed. In 1985 she also began volunteering with Hospice. Today, she's still going strong, calling a list of Hospice patients each Thursday morning to check on their needs.

In addition to helping her hear better when she volunteers, Juanita said her hearing aids allow her to enjoy her favorite television programs, and visiting with her family, which includes five children, seven grandchildren, 14 great grandchildren and five great, great grandchildren.

"I've received good care from both of the Associated Audiologists clinics I've visited," Juanita said. Arlene agreed. "If mom had any problems with her hearing aids, they did their best to help her."

And does Juanita have a secret to living such a long, full life? "I believe the good Lord is in charge of that," she chuckled. "I'm just thankful for my hearing aids and that I can hear what's going on. I can't imagine what life would be like without them."

Bill Would Improve Access to Medicare Audiology Services



The American Academy of Audiology (AAA), Academy of Doctors of Audiology (ADA), and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) have endorsed the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act of 2023, bipartisan legislation introduced recently that would provide seniors with more timely and robust access to services provided by audiologists.

The bill is an updated version of similar legislation introduced in previous Congresses that reflects input from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and would:

- ▶ Provide Medicare coverage of both diagnostic and treatment services provided by audiologists starting in 2025.
- ▶ Remove the physician order requirement so beneficiaries have improved access to audiologists.
- ▶ Reclassify audiologists as practitioners under the Medicare statute, enabling services to be furnished through telehealth beyond the current Dec. 31, 2024, expiration date.

Essentially this legislation would ensure that audiologists can provide the full range of Medicare-covered diagnostic and treatment services that correspond to their scope of practice, just as they do under other programs and payers, so that Medicare recipients receive more appropriate, timely, and cost-effective audiologic care.

Similar legislation secured significant support in previous Congresses, most recently garnering 54 co-sponsors in the House and eight in the Senate during the 117th Congress. Key provisions to allow reimbursement for treatment services and provide practitioner status were also included in legislation passed by the House in 2021.

Common Backgrounds *continued from page 1*

later becoming the “Voice of the Kansas State Wildcats” football team, and more recently, the Play-by-Play Announcer for the Chiefs.

Dr. Steele also earned his undergraduate degree from Kansas State before pursuing his doctorate at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Later, he purchased the Associated Audiologists practice, which included a clinic near and dear to his heart located in Manhattan.

“Dr. Steele and I share a lot of common experiences from being at Kansas State, including a love for Wildcat football,” Mitch added.

Values for Life

But what’s most important to both men are the values they have in common. “Tim has built a great practice with an understanding of the human heart, hard work, and an appreciation for his roots, all while passing that legacy along to his children,” Mitch said. “And I have tried to do the same in my own career.

“Both Dr. Steele and I have been able to perform at a high level in a professional sense and have been leaders within our respective realms of influence, but the baseline is a sense of values, morals and the

upbringing that we can trace back for generations to growing up on farms in rural Kansas,” Mitch added.

Dr. Steele agreed. “Mitch and I share so many connections, starting with our farming backgrounds. Mitch is very humble. I would attribute his success professionally to his faith, values and work ethic. That’s what has propelled him to where he is today.

“I’ve been very honored Mitch chose Associated Audiologists for his hearing care,” Dr. Steele added. “Working with him has been an opportunity to work with the best.”

Tiny Pantry Times Meets Community Need

There's a tiny food pantry that's doing big things for the Overland Park community, all thanks to Jennifer Parker and her husband, Adam, a patient of Dr. Susan Smittkamp's in our Shawnee Mission Clinic.

After starting a successful tiny library, the Parkers decided to branch out. They launched the Tiny Pantry Times, a small food distribution center, in September 2020 during the height of the pandemic.

"We wanted to do more to help during COVID, so we filled the shelves with things we would want to eat," Jennifer said. "Our motto is, 'Take what you need. Share what you can.'"

At first, the Parkers thought the pantry would be a temporary fixture in their front yard at 7215 West 71st St., Overland Park, but it soon became apparent that the need was far greater than they could have imagined.

"That first month, we distributed 2,500 lbs. of food, enough to feed 30 to 40 people," Jennifer said.

When word spread via the Nextdoor app about what the Parkers were doing and that they needed donations to continue, neighbors began leaving bags of food on their doorstep at all hours. After the first two months of operation, the pantry became self-sustaining.

"We are supplying food to people from all walks of life," Jennifer added. "The only question we ask is, 'Do you have everything you need?' We are here to offer a hand up, not a handout."

Though Jennifer and Adam share responsibilities as executive directors of the pantry, they both have full-time jobs. She is a professor at Johnson County Community College teaching anatomy and physiology classes, and he



is an over-the-road truck driver. Plus, they have converted a spare bedroom and their garage into storage for donations.

Three years later, this labor of love has become a community fixture, here to help anyone and everyone in their time of need. "An added bonus for us is that before the pandemic, we kept to ourselves. Now we've formed lasting friendships with many of our neighbors," she said.

Another bonus for the community? The Tiny Pantry is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The shelves are stocked from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. thanks to several volunteers. "Some people can't make it to more traditional pantries during their regular hours because they have to work. Anyone can use the Tiny Pantry Times, anytime they need it," Jennifer said.

In August 2023, the pantry collected 20,000 lbs. of food and distributed 19,500 lbs. "We're now seeing 3,000 to 4,000 people a month," Jennifer said. "Even though the pandemic is over, the need just continues to grow."

For more information, visit www.tinypantrytimes.org.

JOIN US IN SUPPORTING THE TINY PANTRY TIMES

Associated Audiologists applauds Jennifer and Adam Parker for their grassroots efforts to help those in need in their community. In the spirit of the season, our team has made a donation to help the Tiny Pantry Times.

If you'd like to help too, you can:

1. **Leave food donations** at the Parkers' doorstep at 7215 West 71st St., Overland Park, Kansas. Items needed include canned meat, Ramen noodles, canned soup, peanut butter, jelly/jam, canned fruit/applesauce, pasta sauce, canned corn, ketchup, mustard, toilet paper, bar soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes.
2. **Volunteer** by e-mailing Adam at adam@tinypantrytimes.org.
3. **Contribute funds** to help purchase food using the Venmo or Benevity apps.

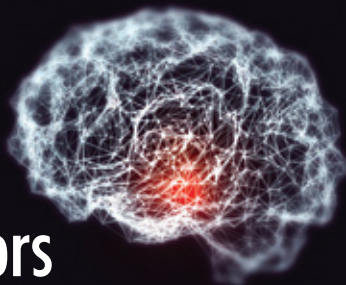


venmo



benevity

New Study Links Hearing Loss to Dementia in Seniors



According to AARP, more than 10,000 baby boomers are turning 65 every day. That makes a recent study, led by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* more relevant than ever. This research found that older adults with more severe hearing loss were more likely to have dementia, but the likelihood of dementia was lower among hearing aid users compared to non-users.

The analysis in the study covered 2,413 individuals, about half of whom were over 80 and showed a clear association between severity of hearing loss and dementia. The study analyzed a nationally representative dataset from the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). The NHATS has been ongoing since 2011 and used a sample of American Medicare beneficiaries over age 65.

In the study, 33.5% of the participants had normal hearing, 36.7% had a mild hearing loss and 29.8% had a moderate to severe hearing loss.

The prevalence of dementia among the participants in the study with moderate to severe hearing loss was 61% higher than prevalence among participants who had normal hearing. The use of hearing aids was associated with a 32% lower prevalence of dementia in the 853 participants who had moderate to severe hearing loss.

How hearing loss is linked to dementia isn't clear, and studies point to several possible mechanisms. This research adds to a body of work by the Cochlear Center for Hearing and Public Health examining the relationship between hearing loss and dementia.

Several earlier studies have also shown a relationship between hearing loss and cognitive decline and that use of hearing aids reduces cognitive decline.

Possible Solutions

Evidence continues to mount that hearing loss and dementia are connected, especially in older patients with more severe hearing loss. With studies such as this showing a lower prevalence of dementia in those using hearing aids, it becomes even more important that older adults have their hearing evaluated by an audiologist, and if diagnosed with a hearing loss, consider the possibility of wearing hearing aids.

Hearing aids have been shown to improve overall quality of life, including providing improved communication, better relationships, lower rates of mental health issues, such as depression, and a better ability to be productive personally and professionally.

Reference: Alison R. Huang, Kening Jiang, Frank R. Lin, Jennifer A. Deal, Nicholas S. Reed. Hearing Loss and Dementia Prevalence in Older Adults in the US. *JAMA*, 2023; 329 (2): 171 DOI: 10.1001/jama.2022.20954.



Red Scarf Project

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. We are currently on track to have a record number of scarves donated this year. Thanks to those who have already given throughout the year.

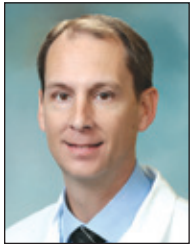
Associated Audiologists also is assisting with this project by covering the cost of shipping for the scarves. If you would like to help, but do not knit or crochet, you can send notes of encouragement that can be included with the scarves.

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 Red Scarf project details and patterns at: <https://www.fc2success.org/programsmentoring-and-support/red-scarf-project/>.

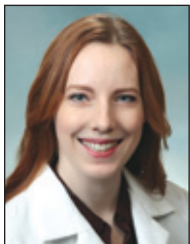
Happy Anniversary!

Several members of the Associated Audiologists team have recently celebrated milestone anniversaries with the practice. Please help us congratulate:



Dave Nissen, Au.D.

Dr. Nissen has been with Associated Audiologists for 25 years. He is a Senior Audiologist, Manager of our Prairie Village Clinic, and was recently promoted to Director of Equipment and Technology for the practice. He joined Associated Audiologists after graduating from the University of Central Missouri, later earning his Doctorate of Audiology degree from the Arizona School of Health Sciences.



Dana Jacobson, Au.D.

Dr. Jacobson celebrated 15 years with the practice recently. She is a Senior Audiologist and Overland Park Clinic Manager. Dr. Jacobson joined the practice after performing her clinical externship here. She earned her Doctorate of Audiology degree from the University of Kansas and provides clinical supervision to graduate students at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She currently serves on the Kansas Board of Hearing Aid Examiners.



Julie Steele

Julie, who is Director of Operations for the practice, marked her 15-year anniversary with the practice earlier this year. Julie oversees the administrative team for all eight clinics, as well as daily operational issues. She is also a member of the Olathe School Board and a busy mom to four active children.



Linda Erickson, Au.D.

Dr. Erickson reached her 10-year anniversary in November with Associated Audiologists. She is a senior audiologist and sees patients in our Overland Park and Prairie Village Clinics. She completed her Doctorate of Audiology with A.T. Still University in 2015.



Jonathan York, Au.D.

Dr. York is an Audiologist who joined Associated Audiologists 5 years ago after performing his externship with the practice and graduating from Wichita State University. He sees patients at our Northland and Prairie Village Clinics.

Moving up!



David Paul, Au.D., was recently promoted to Clinic Manager for the Leavenworth and Lawrence clinics. Dr. Paul joined the practice several years ago after completing his externship here and

graduating with his Doctorate in Audiology from the University of Kansas Medical Center. Under his leadership, the Leavenworth and Lawrence clinics have become very successful.

Dr. Paul also is a Major in the United States Army Reserves and has completed several missions, both in the U.S. and internationally.

Simply the Best ...

Katie Rhoads, Au.D.,

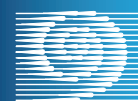
was selected as one of the "Best Audiologists" in the Best of the Northland competition sponsored by the *Gladstone Tribune*.

Dr. Rhoads sees patients at our Northland Clinic.



David Paul, Au.D., and **Katelyn Waldeier, Au.D.**, also were selected as among the "Best Audiologists," in the Best of Lawrence competition sponsored by the *Lawrence Journal-World*. They see patients at our Lawrence Clinic.

In addition, Dr. Paul and Dr. Waldeier were chosen by readers of the *Leavenworth Times* as the Best Audiologists in Leavenworth based on a recent readership poll.



**ASSOCIATED
AUDIOLOGISTS**

We are on a mission:

**To improve lives through
comprehensive audiology care.**

Changing Wax Filters

Ear wax serves an important purpose, protecting your ears from debris and dirt daily. But ear wax also can build up, causing problems if you wear hearing aids.

That's why most hearing aids come with built-in mechanisms such as wax filters, guards or traps. These tiny components protect your hearing aids, preventing earwax from entering the devices. In fact, these filters serve an important function, helping maintain the sound quality of your hearing aids and extending their life.

However, we find that many patients forget to change their wax filters, which can affect hearing aid performance. Because ear wax production varies greatly from person to person, it's difficult to set a standard for how often the filters should be changed.

Generally, wax filters vary by manufacturer and can be easily replaced by the patient. A supply of replacement filters is usually provided with the purchase of hearing aids. More can be purchased at our clinics when needed. Our recommendation is to clean wax from the outside of your aids daily, and then check the wax filters routinely for wax and debris.



To keep your hearing aids functioning well, change the filters as often as needed. If you produce a large amount of ear wax, you might need to change them weekly, but if you produce a small amount of ear wax, you might only need to change them every couple of months.

Consult your audiologist if you have questions about your hearing aids and wax filters. Replacement filters for most models are available in our clinics or can be mailed to you.

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Northland	Overland Park	Prairie Village	Shawnee Mission	Eastern Jackson County	Lawrence	Leavenworth	Manhattan
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Dr. Steele Receives Honors of the Association

Tim Steele, Ph.D., President and CEO of Associated Audiologists, was awarded the Honors of the Association by the president of the Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA) at the organization's annual convention Sept. 28, 2023.

This is the highest honor awarded by KSHA to an audiologist or speech-language professional. It recognizes Dr. Steele's significant contributions to KSHA, including his outstanding leadership while providing an example of professional excellence. Recipients provide distinguished contributions and service to the field and the Association related to teaching and/or research and/or service to the profession and active involvement in KSHA.



Some of Dr. Steele's great nomination support letters stated the following:

"Tim has been one of the most influential people in state and national advocacy efforts."

"His impact on patients is unquantifiable."

"His contributions to students, philanthropy and KSHA are exceptional."

"Dr. Steele has a special gift of writing hand-written notes to everyone for every occasion and even attempts to wear patients' favorite colors on the days he knows he is seeing them."

He is joined in the above photo by his team, his long-time colleague Larry Ruder, and family. ***Congratulations Dr. Steele!***



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