

CUSTOM FIT

Audiologist listens to patients' needs

By Tracy Geibel
Eagle Intern

When Phil Kriley, 62, was first fitted for hearing aids in high school, he refused to wear them.

Now, the Renfrew resident can't imagine life without them. Kriley, a patient at Wiest Audiology and Professional Hearing Aid Service in Butler Township, keeps them in all day.

Wiest Audiology was founded by state-licensed audiologist Evelyn Wiest-Kertz in 1992, though she previously worked at other offices, acquiring a total of 30

years experience. She attended Clarion University, where she earned a master of science in audiology.

Her audiology company is board-certified by the American Speech Language and Hearing Association and is a registered state hearing aid dealer.

Wiest-Kertz said she listens to her patients to make sure the hearing aid is working well for them, and then adjusts the hearing aid over time. But, it's different for each individual.

"You can get a product from any manufacturer,

but the person who is actually doing the programming is going to make it fit for that patient's individual needs," Wiest-Kertz said.

According to Wiest-Kertz, only a small percentage of people with hearing loss can't be helped through a hearing aid, as long as a professional is fitting them correctly. And patients need to revisit their audiologist for adjustments so their hearing aids work optimally.

Within the first year, patients can expect nearly 10 visits, and afterward, they should



Audiologist Evelyn Wiest-Kertz checks in Butler Township. The business was founded in 1992 by Wiest-Kertz. Justin Guido/Butler Eagle

schedule maintenance and retesting. Because patients come back often, she's able to build relationships with them. "I try to listen to patients' needs. Anybody can take a hearing aid out of a box to do a first fit and sell it to you, but that's not how we operate," she said. Kriley always avoids See Listens, Page 11

Listens

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Phil Kriley, 62, Rentfrew, a Pittsburgh Concert Chorale performer

ed wearing his hearing aids as a student in high school and college, only consistently wearing them at around age 30, when using them was still "like pulling teeth." But since then, Kriley has left this mindset behind.

Kriley and his wife began performing with the Pittsburgh Concert Chorale four years ago.

Even before then, music was an essential part of his life: He studied it at Duquesne University and has participated in local musical theater for much of his life.

"She [Wiest-Kertz] is understanding and very patient," Kriley said. "She takes the time to make sure it's right, so I can actually wear the hearing aids when I'm on stage."

Two months ago, he was fitted for his most recent set of hearing aids, the Opticon Opn, at Wiest-Kertz's office.

While his previous hearing aids worked well for the chorale, Kriley still struggled in noisy environments.

"Now, I can actually hear the waiter or waitress better than my wife can in a restaurant, and she has excellent hearing," Kriley said.

Wiest-Kertz explained that the sound processors in Kriley's new

hearing aids are working faster, which allows the patient to use 20 percent less effort when listening and to better recall conversations, even in noisy situations.

Kriley said it's true. While participating in group conversations was once nearly impossible, now he can join in.

Plus, he isn't exhausted from listening, often keeping the hearing aids in when only he and the cat are home.

A survey conducted in 1999 by the National

Council on Aging shows that individuals who didn't wear hearing aids were more likely to suffer from psychosocial disorders like depression and anxiety.

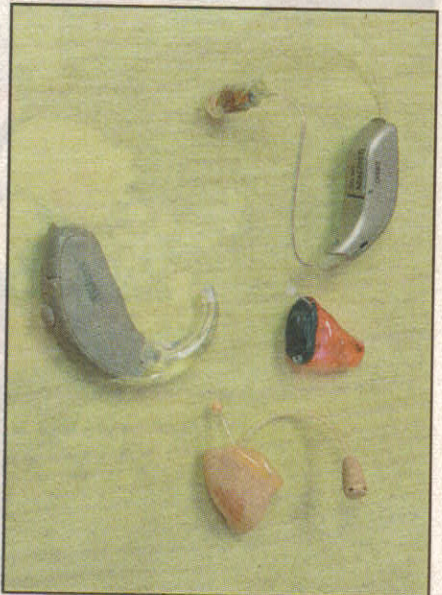
Another more recent study at Johns Hopkins University showed a strong link between hearing loss and a risk of dementia.

It found that people with mild and moderate hearing loss were two or three times more likely to develop dementia, but it wasn't able to confirm

that early treatment of the hearing loss could reduce the risk.

New technology is put to use with hearing aids as well, allowing Wiest-Kertz to connect hearing aids with smartphones, televisions and other devices.

Hearing aids could work well without being



Wiest Audiology and Professional Hearing Aid Service in Butler Township offers a variety of hearing aids.

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connected, but she said the connection option is helpful to some patients.

In honor of October, National Audiology Awareness month, Wiest Audiology plans to offer a workshop about the latest news in the industry.

For more information, call 724-283-3984 or visit wiestaudiologyphas.com.