

# Hampden Hearing Center

## *The Finest Hearing Care by Doctors of Audiology*

**S**usan Bankoski Chnyk finds it frustrating as a professional audiologist who wants to help people hear better that of the 31.5 million Americans with hearing loss. only 22 percent wear hearing aids.

Owner of Hampden Hearing Center in East Longmeadow. Dr. Chnyk said there are many reasons people don't wear hearing aids. with cost often cited as the chief reason.

"Most private insurance plans do not cover hearing aids. although some have partial benefits, and only about 10-12 percent of those purchased are covered by third party insurance," said Dr. Chnyk. who has owned the center since 1984.

The licensed audiologist noted one avenue to potentially reduce out-of-pocket expenses is pending legislation known as the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit Bill.

If passed. the bill will provide a tax credit of \$500 per hearing aid available once every five years for those over age 55 and to parents of dependent children who have hearing loss. More information on the bill is available by visiting [www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org](http://www.hearingaidtaxcredit.org).

"I encourage the 12 million Americans who can take advantage of this credit to contact their legislators to support the bill." Dr. Chnyk said.

"And. if the bill doesn't apply to you, then you should consider encouraging your employer's benefits manager to add a hearing aid benefit to the company insurance plan. or explore using funds accrued through flexible spending accounts." she added.

The audiologist - whose business provides comprehensive hearing

evaluations and individual rehabilitation programs that include hearing aids - also noted that despite all the information available on the Internet today, there remains a wealth of misinformation about hearing loss and hearing aids.

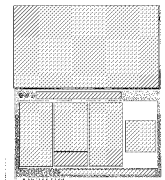
Dr. Chnyk said some believe hearing aids are only for "old people." while actually most instruments are designed for those with active lifestyles. regardless of age. including a model with an accessory providing wireless connectivity to a cell phone. iPod. or any Bluetooth-enabled device.

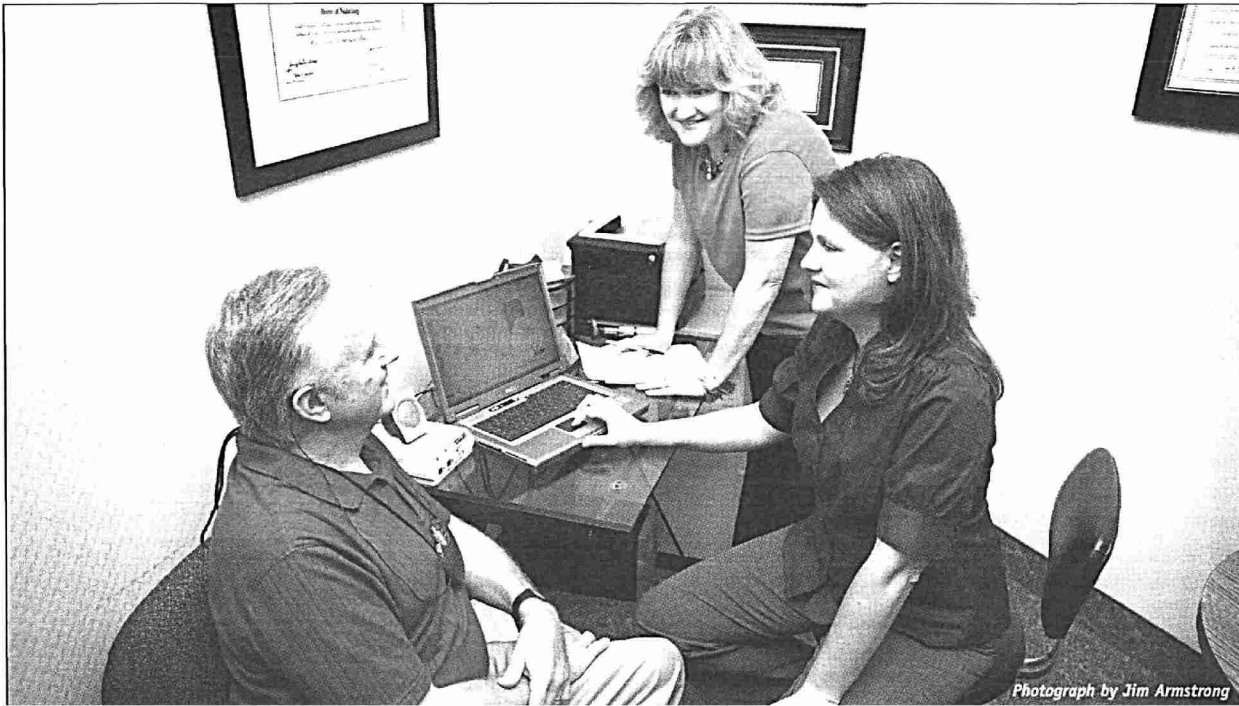
Other myths include hearing aids don't help with nerve loss. They do. Or they are only useful for severe hearing loss. Not true. There are hearing instruments designed simply for clarity and not only for volume purposes. Some still believe hearing aids are ugly. But today's hearing devices are smaller and more discreet. available in a variety of colors to match your hair or skin color or even in animal print or purple.

"You can make your own fashion statement with hearing aids today." Dr. Chnyk said.

## **HAMPDEN** **HEARING** **CENTER**

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*Photograph by Jim Armstrong*