

## Information from Jordan School District Audiology Department

### **Leisure Activities Rife With Loud Noise**

#### ***May Is Better Hearing & Speech Month***

With more than half of Americans who experience noise-induced hearing loss not working in noisy jobs, the spotlight turns to what Americans are doing in their leisure time. May 1st marks the beginning of *Better Hearing & Speech Month*—a time to assess lifestyle habits that may be contributing to hearing loss.

About 40 million U.S. adults aged 20–69 years have noise-induced hearing loss, a form of hearing damage that results from exposure to loud noise. This could be cumulative harm that developed from exposure over time, or it could occur from one severe episode. Although completely preventable, once it occurs, it is irreversible. Far from simply being an annoyance, hearing loss can affect almost all aspects of life, including physical health, mental health, employment status and success, social functioning and satisfaction, and much more.

In addition to the dangers posed by listening to ear buds or headphones at too-loud volumes and for too long, noisy settings are commonplace in today's society. Many restaurants are specifically designed to elevate noise levels to make establishments feel more energetic. Similarly, some sports stadiums have been built with sound elevation in mind, thought to improve the fan experience and serve as a home-team advantage. Coffee shops, fitness classes, and more all make modern society a collectively loud place.

Although many people report concern about noisy environments, not nearly enough take protective steps. The American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) offers some simple ways that the public can take charge of their hearing health—this month and always:

- **Wear hearing protection.** Earplugs and earmuffs are inexpensive, portable, and (with a good fit) offer excellent hearing protection. Bring them along when you know you'll be in a noisy setting. Better yet, keep them on you at all times!
- **Reduce exposure.** Take steps to reduce your exposure to noisy settings. Visit noisy establishments during off times, consider quieter settings, and talk to managers if you find the noise level uncomfortable.
- **Reduce the exposure and volume.** Take a break or reduce the volume of ear buds and headphones of the personal audio devices.

This advice about hearing protection goes for just about everyone, from the youngest of children to older adults, from those with excellent hearing who want to maintain it, to those who already have some hearing loss and don't want to make it worse. As a society, everyone needs to prioritize hearing protection.