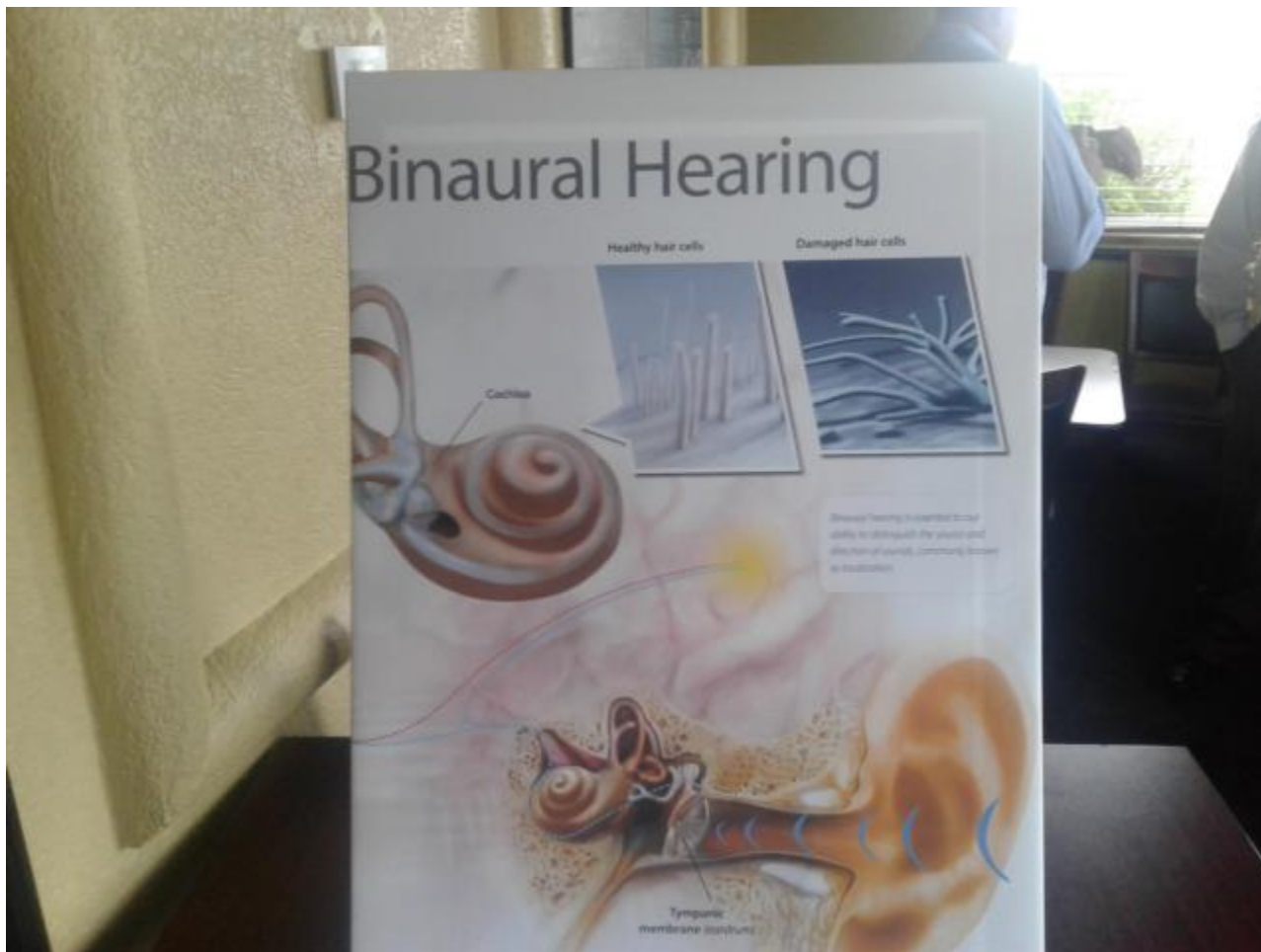


# Protecting your ears: Lunch and Learn with MidAmerica Audiology Group

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**ALTON** - Doctors' offices can sometimes be stressful formal settings for many people.

To quell some of that anxiety while still being able to address important medical issues, MidAmerica Audiology Group held a "Lunch and Learn" event at 4204 Main St. Brewing Company, located at 180 Center Dr. in Alton. During the luncheon, people

were invited to speak to audiologists regarding their hearing and ear health. Audiologists - not hearing aid salespeople - were on hand to examine people and ask questions.

"It's a very neutral environment," the group's office manager Lisa Maag said. "Coming into an office causes anxiety for some. This environment will encourage people to come out and speak with professionals and learn."

Maag said audiologists would also be instructing those assembled for lunch regarding summer hazards to hearing, such as the loud sounds generated by yard tools as well as earbuds turned to too high of a volume while working or enjoying music.

Such abuse on ears can damage small cells over time, and those cells contribute to hearing. Damage to those cells, therefore causes hearing loss. Those cells are also weakened by aging, however, constant loud noises caused by excessive yard work without ear protection as well as loud concerts can exacerbate that problem.

Even if someone is suffering hearing loss, however, long term ear abuse and age may not be the full story. Maag said another reason audiologists were at the luncheon was to ensure such hearing loss was not connected to a (possibly more serious) medical issue.

"Sometimes, especially if hearing loss and tinnitus is coupled with something like dizziness, there is something more medically wrong than this kind of hearing loss," Maag said. "That's when we refer people to a physician for a proper examination."

She said further medical issues than simply hearing loss are additional reasons people suffering with hearing loss should meet with an audiologist before seeking relief through hearing aids. Maag said advertisements for hearing aids often bring people seeking hearing repair, but do not help people find possible underlying conditions.