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**Olympic Champion Also Achieves Excellence by Protecting His Child’s Hearing**

(Reston, VA – August 12, 2016) ”Audiologists around the world celebrated not only Michael Phelps’ outstanding Olympic achievements, but also the commitment of Michael and his fiancée to protecting their child’s ears in a very noisy and reverberant environment,” said Ian Windmill, PhD, President of the American Academy of Audiology.

During recent Olympic swim meets, Phelps’ fiancée was shown holding their 3-month-old son, Boomer. Boomer was wearing a set of noise-reducing earphones in order to protect his young ears from the noise of the crowd in the stadium.

“Parents often believe when their child passes their newborn hearing screening at birth, that the child's hearing will remain stable throughout their childhood,” Windmill said. “However, noise induced hearing loss causes irreversible damage in all ages and its effects are cumulative over time. Fortunately, noise-induced hearing loss is 100 percent preventable. Phelps’ leadership in using hearing protection for his son set a wonderful example for parents around the world.”

Noise-induced hearing loss is caused by damage to the hair cells that are found in our inner ear. Hair cells are small sensory cells that convert the sounds we hear (sound energy) into electrical signals that travel to the brain. Once damaged, our hair cells cannot grow back, causing permanent hearing loss. Childhood noise risks include sporting events, loud toys, firecrackers and fireworks, and loud music from concerts or MP3 players. The louder the sound, the shorter the amount of time one can safely be around it. Options to protect children from loud sounds include removing them from the loud environment, turning down the volume, or using hearing protection like that used by Phelps’ son.

The Academy has a consumer Web site titled “How’s Your Hearing? Ask an Audiologist” ([www.howsyourhearing.org](http://www.howsyourhearing.org/)) where visitors can learn more about hearing loss, what causes it, and how to prevent it, as well as what an audiologist is and where they can find the audiologist closest to them.

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The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by, and for audiologists. With an active membership of more than 12,000 audiologists, the Academy promotes quality hearing and balance care by advancing the profession of audiology through leadership, advocacy, education, public awareness, and support of research. For more information about the American Academy of Audiology, visit [www.audiology.org.](http://www.audiology.org/)

