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BELTONE HEARING CLINICS

iPhone controlled hearing aids

BY STEVE MACNAULL

The Okanagan Saturday

All the hip grandpas and grandmas are controlling their hearing aids with iPhones these days.

“The Beltone First hearing aid is the world’s first all-digital hearing aid with a tiny FM antenna that can communicate wirelessly with an iPhone, iPad or iTouch smartphone or tablet,” said Beltone Hearing Clinics general manager Frank Skubski during a tour of the Okanagan.

“It really is amazing technology.”

In the past, adjustments to hearing aids usually required the person to take it off and fiddle with small buttons or grope behind their ear to try to make changes.

But the technology advancements of Apple company’s ‘i’ line of wireless products makes such manual adjustments a thing of the past.

Once connected wirelessly, the iPhone or iPad communicates with the Beltone First.

The user simply uses the special application and screen on their smartphone to turn volume up and down on the hearing aid and adjust treble and bass.

And this being iPhone means there are many extra, cool features.

“You can also listen to music through your iPhone to your hearing aid or listen to the TV audio if you are watching on your iPad and even get GPS prompts to your hearing aid if you are using one of your devices for directions while driving or exploring,” said Skubski.

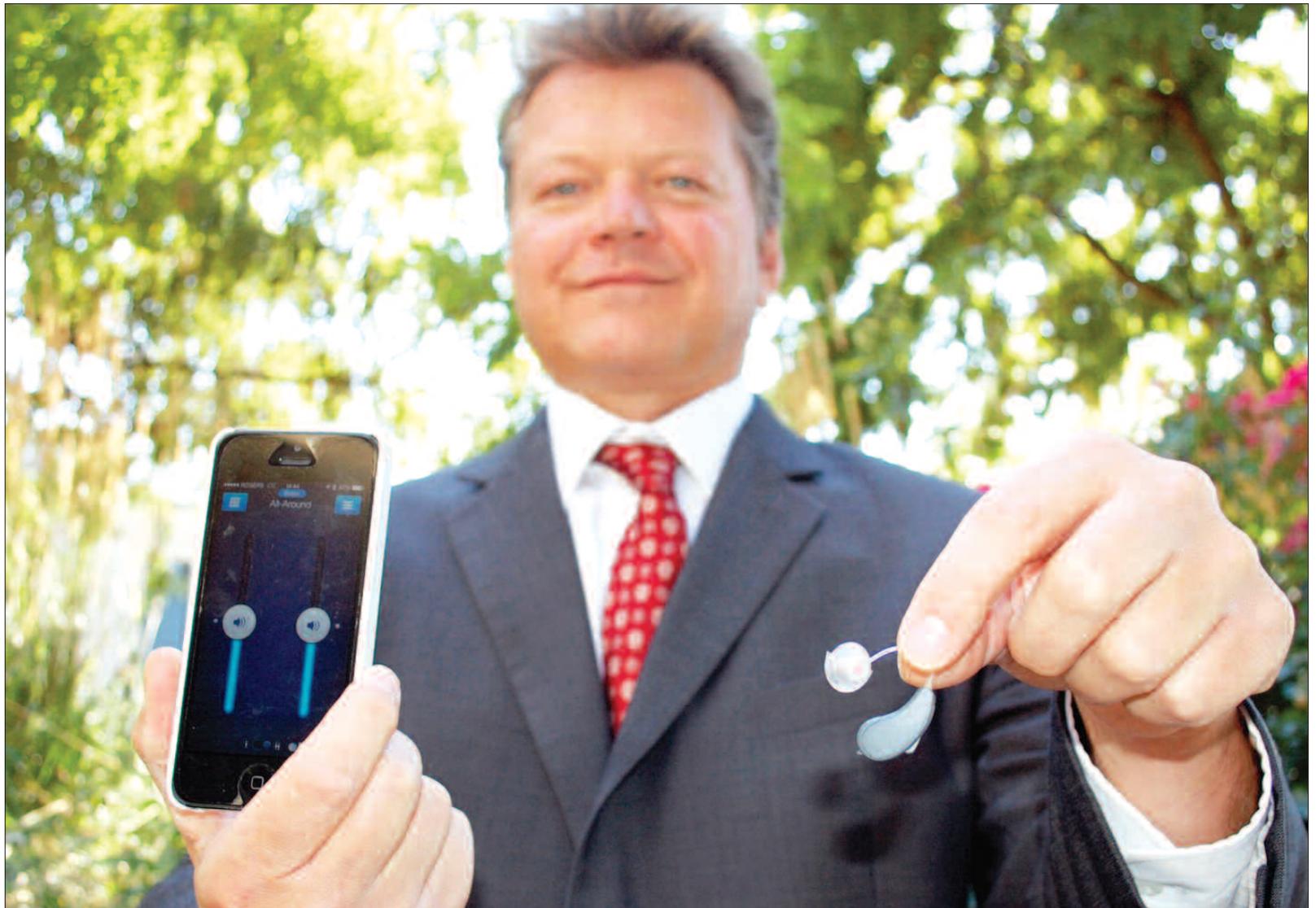
The GPS feature is also handy if you misplace your hearing aid.

Your iPhone will direct you to it with a map or audio prompts.

Skubski is touring the country promoting not just Beltone First, but the importance of protecting your hearing and getting help when you become hard of hearing.

Beltone has stores in Penticton, Summerland, Osoyoos and Oliver and is looking at opening one in Kelowna.

In all, Beltone has 300 stores across Canada and 1,500 stores



STEVE MacNAULL/The Okanagan Saturday

Toronto-based Beltone Hearing Clinics Canada general manager Frank Skubski was in the Okanagan recently promoting new tiny hearing aids that can be controlled from an iPhone, iPad and-or iTouch.

in North America.

At age 65, about 30 per cent of the population has hearing loss that would benefit from a hearing aid.

By age 75 that percentage spikes to 47.

A pair of Beltone First hearing aids cost between \$4,000 and \$6,500.

Some people have work or private health insurance that will cover all or part of the cost.

“We just urge people to be preventative and proactive with their hearing,” said Skubski.

“A lot of people don’t want to get a hearing aid because of the stigma that hearing aids are for old people. But, when you have hearing loss, get tested and get fitted. Most people wait 10 years before they do something about hearing loss.



It’s hard to notice someone is wearing the new generation of hearing aids because they are so small.