Central New York

Deaf/HH Teens

First Edition, 2016

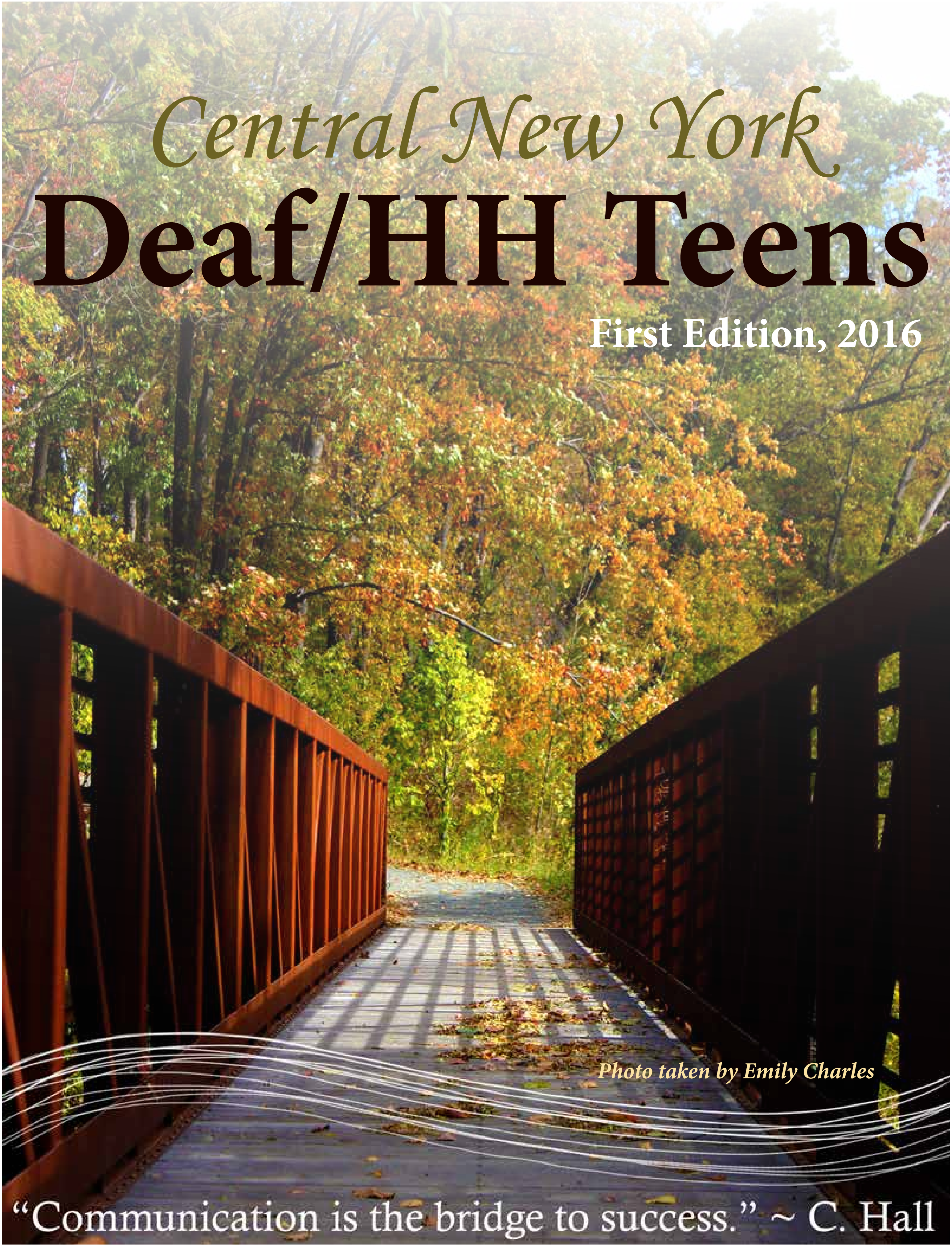

Photo taken by Emily Charles

“Communication is the bridge to success.” ~ C. Hall

Dear Readers,

After viewing several publications that shared a Deaf/HH person's biography, we became inspired to create one of our own! This was an extensive, collaborative process, beginning with brainstorming ideas, creating a questionnaire, conducting face-to-face interviews, drafting stories, editing photos, crafting pages and then compiling the information into the finished product you are now viewing.

Our purpose for publishing this magazine was to highlight the talented Deaf/HH teens from Central New York, as well as to expand the readers' knowledge regarding deafness. This magazine was designed with everyone in mind, but the focus was on Deaf/HH students and their families. However, we think that every reader can benefit and will be able to take away something from the reading.

Feel free to send us your feedback as we are already gearing up for volume two. We hope you enjoy the publication!

Best Wishes,

Deaf/HH Students:
Heidi Brown
Tonaya Gorton
Emily Charles

Tamara Seymour
Teacher of the Deaf/HH
The Center for Instruction,
Technology & Innovation (CiTi)

Contact us!

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A special "Thank You" to:
Charlotte Hall, Alice Scott, Jon Miller, Naomi Himes and Dan Farfaglia.

Charlene Purchas

Education:

Charlene is an alumna of Mexico Academy and Central Schools (MACS). She graduated in 2014 with a regents diploma. MACS is a public school of approximately 2,150 students. Her support services included an interpreter/captionist, a teacher of the Deaf/HH (TOD), a speech and language pathologist (SLP), an educational audiologist and a case-manager for her IEP. "I received so much help from this school," said Charlene. "Without these people, I wouldn't be where I am today. I would be lost because I wouldn't have had the supports I needed to prepare me for college."

The majority of Charlene's education has been in a mainstreamed setting. Her schooling began with early intervention services and a special education teacher, TOD and SLP in her home. Later, she attended a BOCES Deaf Education pre-school, and at five, Charlene entered kindergarten in a hearing school. Her elementary setting also included a self-contained Deaf/HH classroom. In this setting she received direct English Language Arts instruction and support from a TOD. She was then mainstreamed for her remaining classes, with an interpreter. Once she reached middle school, she attended all classes with her hearing peers and an interpreter.

In Charlene's experience, it was common to keep the same interpreter for several consecutive years. She shared how difficult it was during a transitioning year, getting to know a new interpreter. Not only is there an adjustment getting to know their signing style, but also in feeling comfortable asking for help. "I believe it is important for the student-interpreter relationship to be professional when in mainstreamed classroom settings, but I prefer a more relaxed environment when one-on-one to allow for more open communication."

In middle school, Charlene was introduced to a service called captioning using C-Print software. C-Print® is a speech-to-text (captioning) technology and service developed at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, a college of Rochester Institute of Technology. The system is successfully being used to provide communication access to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in many programs around the country.

A trained service provider uses the word-

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“I always persevere . . . not giving up on my goals by working hard and giving my best.” ~Charlene

abbreviation feature in C-Print Pro™ to closely capture lecture information. C-Print Pro allows transformation of phonetics-based abbreviations into full words on a computer screen and produces a real-time display that a student can read on a laptop computer. Electronic files can also be saved and used for review after class. In addition to educational environments, C-Print also can be used in business and community settings and with individuals with other disabilities, such as those with a visual impairment or a learning disability. (https://www.rit.edu/ntid/cprint)

Charlene participated in a research project through NTID/RIT to explore if adding the ability to provide graphical information side-by-side with the traditional real-time captioning, would improve student achievement and access (https://www.rit.edu/ntid/cprint/research-publications). Some would say that Charlene had the “best of both worlds,” because her speech-to-text captionist was also her interpreter. Later in high school, Charlene was given the independence to decide which service would provide her with the most access. She valued the notes for key terms and summaries of important content, but her preferred mode was signing.

Charlene did not let hearing loss interfere with her desire to participate in high school extracurricular activities. She played softball for one year and later was the team’s scorekeeper. She also kept score for volleyball and basketball. Charlene volunteered for different extracurricular activities such as setting up candles in the school windows, decorating school hallways, building floats for the homecoming parade and acting as an assistant at the Deaf/HH Club at the Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation.

Charlene always strived for success; she was on the honor or high honor roll for most grading quarters. Throughout her entire high school career, she remained in the top 25 of her class. Charlene was also a member of the National Honor Society and a recipient of a MACS scholarship. In her senior year, she was the winner of the Auroras Excellence Award. Each year, Aurora of CNY selects a young person who is blind or visually impaired and a young person who is Deaf or hard of hearing to receive an Excellence Award in recognition of their commitment to personal and academic growth, and for service to their community. Nominees for this award must meet specific criteria (www.auroraofcny.org).

Charlene gives credit to her IEP for providing her with access to auditory information and accommodations to “equal the playing field.” “In addition to my service providers, my teachers followed my IEP. Every year, the IEP was updated and modified as needed,” she said. She had modifications such as separate location and extended time.

Under assistive technology, she had personal hearing aids, an F-M system, tablets for captioning, CC, the use of a word processor for essays, etc.

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At college, she uses a computer to write essays and CC/open caption for media presentations. She also has a bed shaker alarm and uses her iPhone to communicate. Charlene's doctors and therapists are now sending her reminders for her appointments through email instead of a voice message.

When asked if she could change one thing about her secondary setting, Charlene said,"I wish all schools provided ASL or Signed Exact English as a foreign language. In my community, there have been only a couple of school districts that offer ASL, and mine was not one of them." It is difficult to predict where or in which culture (deaf culture or the hearing culture) DHH students will choose to live in after high school. Those who decide to attend a deaf college such as RIT/NTID sometimes feel frustrated because of their lack of ASL knowledge and skill.

Charlene has completed one year at NTID/RIT. Her major is Information and Computing Studies (ICS). "I chose NTID/RIT, because it has the best community for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and also has majors that fit my interests," she says. Charlene spent two years at the Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation (CiTi) in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Digital Media program learning about computers and design. Charlene also completed two internships at MACS high school in the instructional technology (IT) department. She then worked two summers as a paid employee in the IT department through the Oswego County Youth Works Program.

Hearing Loss:

Charlene has a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Her left ear is severe to profound, and her right is profound. Her hearing loss was detected at about age two after several instances of middle ear infection and high fever. Charlene's parents were concerned that she had a hearing loss and was not developing age-appropriate language. "When Charlene became frustrated because her needs were not met, she would display temper tantrums," said her father, Matthew, from a 1999 evaluation. She went through multiple evaluations and was amplified about a year later. Charlene has always worn bilateral behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids until her senior year of high school. Since she received no residual hearing benefit from wearing her right aid, she decided to only wear her left aid. Charlene has been researching the possibility of a cochlear implant in her right ear. Driving is very difficult for Charlene; she is very exasperated, unable to communicate with her passengers.

While in school, she utilized an F-M amplification system monitored by an educational audiologist. Charlene often chose to utilize her F-M system after school and for community events such as banquets, sports, meetings and at CiTi for

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presentations. "A good day for me is when I can hear fine, nothing is distracting me," she says. "A bad day (which happens often) is when my hearing aid is not performing perfectly. It won't turn on, the batteries are dead or the tube is full of wax, making it difficult for sound to pass through." Just the fact of having only one aid makes it challenging to locate whose speaking. Sometimes, Charlene forgets to bring along extra batteries, something she knows she needs to work on, because her amplification equipment is essential for accessing auditory information in her academic, social, family and work environments."

Communication:

"I used to communicate with voice mostly, due to being in a hearing school," said Charlene. "But currently, I have been using more of a Total Communication (TC) approach; voice and sign at the same time. I prefer when people communicate with me using the TC method." When Charlene is in a 1:1 setting, she also uses lip-reading skills. "Bigger groups are more difficult for me," she shares. "I keep looking from one person to the next. I need to know who is talking to read their lips. People's accents or rate of speech affect what is understood. When I was in public school, I sometimes would put the F-M microphone in the middle of the group." Charlene will often ask people to be patient and respectful of her hearing needs, so that she can be an active participant in the conversation.

Always in a mainstreamed setting, Charlene has had little contact with DHH peers. "Communication is important to me and often a challenge because I am surrounded by hearing people," she says. Most of her friends in high school were hearing; two were hard of hearing but not fluent in sign language. That changed when she entered college at NTID/RIT, where she was immersed in a "deaf culture." But there again, Charlene encountered communication challenges. "I am not fluent in ASL and sometimes feel embarrassed when I'm trying to have a conversation with other deaf students or staff members," she says. "It's a similar situation when I am trying to use my voice to communicate with hearing people. That's why I suggest everyone learn TC for both communities (deaf and hearing)."

Communication is a continual hurdle. Charlene feels it is something that hearing folks take for granted. "Communication is very difficult for me, but I always had an interpreter there for me during school and for after school functions, which helped tremendously," she shared. When Charlene played on the softball team, she stated that she would have been lost and frustrated if she didn't have an interpreter and her F-M equipment. She feels very lucky to have had an interpreter available.

It is often difficult to find an interpreter willing to work after school hours.

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"It is my responsibility to inform the interpreter of the time and date of the activity I need interpreted," says Charlene. "My mom will call for an interpreter outside of school such as for an appointment or an interview."

In social situations, Charlene often relies on family (her mom or sister) to assist her with conversations. They always try to keep her involved in all interactions going on around her. Sometimes, they sign to her or she reads their lips.

If the communication barrier exists, she resorts to using paper and pen or her smartphone. On a recent job interview, she came prepared with paper and pencil in case a problem occurred.

Out in the community, Charlene prefers going through the self-service lane in stores like Wal-Mart where she doesn't have to worry about not understanding the cashier. She has also noticed that certain restaurants, like Panera Bread, have a tablet device set up to take orders and pay without having direct contact with workers. She often feels anxious in those situations, and the presence of background noise only decreases her ability to correct information auditorily. She would like to see more stores become "deaf friendly."

Charlene poses for a photo with her role model, Matt Hamill.

Advice:

Charlene's advice to everyone is to learn ASL, because you will need it when you meet other DHH individuals and want to communicate, especially for parents of DHH children.

Her goals are to finish RIT/NTID and graduate and become successful in a career. She wants to continue coming up with several new ideas for how to improve communication between deaf and hearing people. Her advice to high school DHH students is, "Never give up on your life even when it's hard. Try to finish your education, and if planning to apply to colleges, I would suggest NTID/RIT because it is a DHH-friendly environment with numerous support services."

Charlene's role model is Matt Hamill, because they faced similar challenges growing up and persevered. They both have attended the same college (NTID/RIT) and want to educate others on deafness. In 2014, Matt Hamill visited Fulton Junior-Senior High School to give a motivational speech. Charlene, along with her DHH peers from the Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation (CiTi) were among the privileged audience. Her take away from that experience, inspired a quote she lives by, "You can do it!"

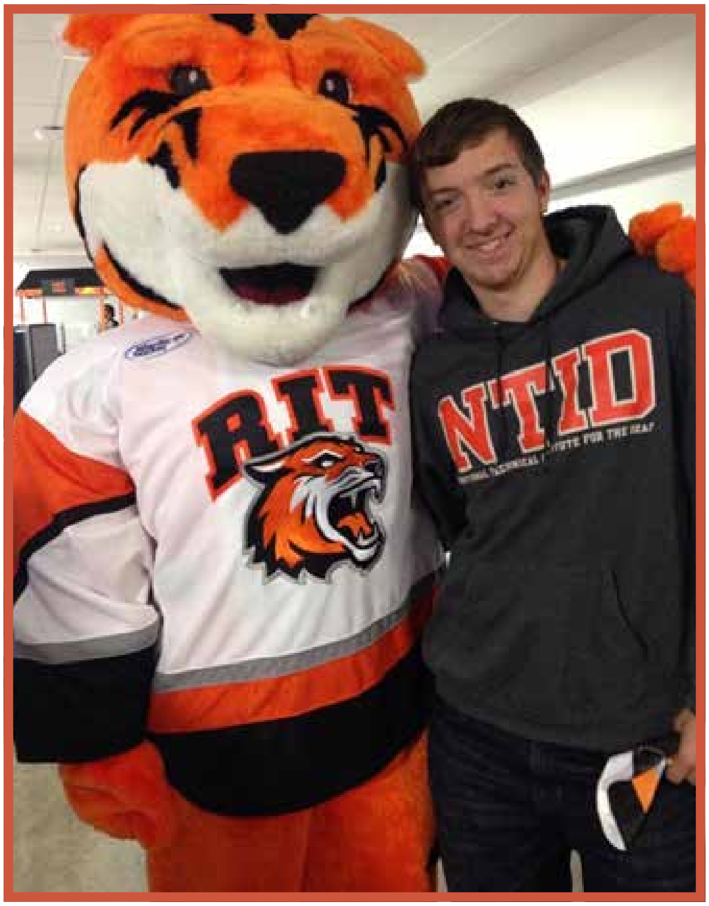
Albert Barry McGrain III

Education:

Barry (as he is referred to by family and friends) is a second-year college student. He attended Livonia Central Schools from Pre-K until his senior year. Livonia is a small town thirty minutes south of Rochester. Livonia Central is a public district with an approximate enrollment of 1,860 students. All three schools (elementary, middle and high school) are located on the same campus. Barry has always enjoyed English class, but found math and science to be more challenging. His support services included an interpreter and a teacher of the deaf.

Barry has excelled in swimming since the seventh grade. He participated on the school swim team for six years and also swam with the community swim club. He has won numerous awards in swimming: 30 ribbons for swimming competitions ranging from eighth place and above, Most Improved in four years, and his team won LCAA three years in a row. Barry enjoys swimming so much so that he has shared his talents with youngsters, coaching a youth swim club.

Barry is currently in his second year at RIT/NTID. He chose RIT because of the large population of Deaf/HH students from all over the world. It is also conveniently close to his home.



Hearing Loss:

Barry was born with a bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss. He received a cochlear implant at the age of four. His implant is an Advanced Bionic Device. He experiences some challenges with his listening equipment. Sometimes just the technology of the device is frustrating like when it shuts off and on about every five minutes. It is more challenging to hear or to miss information when there is background noise.

Communication:

Growing up, Barry relied on sign language to communicate. Today, he is comfortable using his voice and signing for his communication.

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“Never give up and keep your head up!”
~Barry

He switches back and forth depending on who he is chatting with. Barry’s family learned sign language along with him at an early age. His dad or sister will quickly step-in and sign when he is having difficulty understanding conversations with hearing people. When talking to hearing friends, Barry sticks with voice, but with Deaf/HH friends, he combines his voice and sign at the same time. He also uses his cell phone as a communication tool for texting.

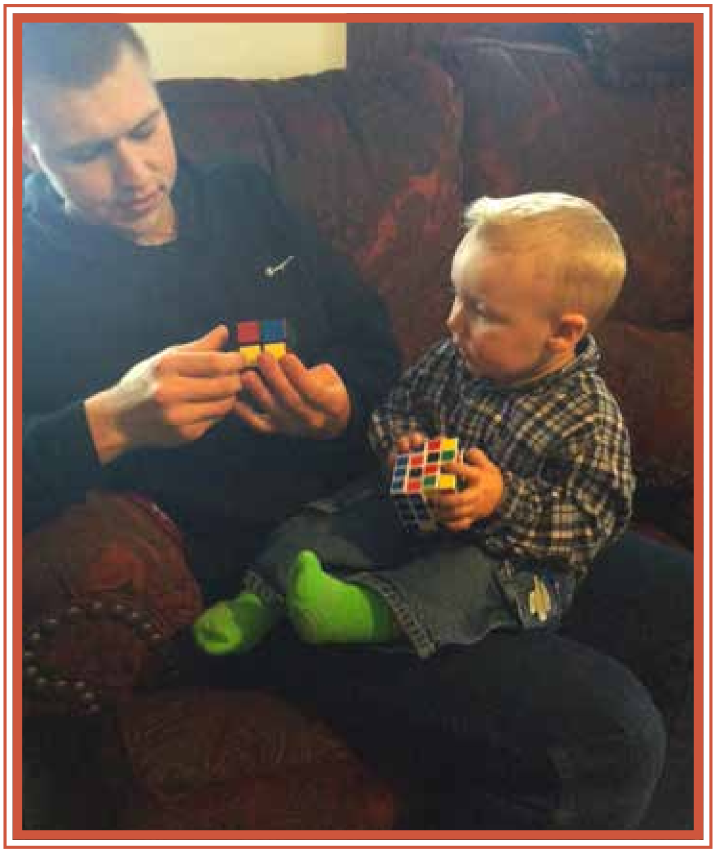
Barry shared with us that it was challenging for him to communicate when he was swimming. “I was on the high school swim team and couldn’t wear my CI or my glasses in the pool,” he said. In addition to a hearing loss, Barry has Usher Syndrome and was born legally blind. (http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/usher.aspx)

As a result of Usher Syndrome, Barry finds it difficult to see people and things around him, or within his peripheral vision. For swim meets and practices, he used an interpreter. His school did not have lights to start races, and he could not hear the starting gun without his CI. Barry relied on his interpreter to tap his shoulder, which was a disadvantage for him. Sometimes he was even disqualified. His determination and life experiences have helped him to overcome these and many other challenges.

Goals/Advice:

Barry plans to finish college at RIT/NTID and looks forward to a successful career. His role model is Tim Tebow, not because of his football talent, but because of his perseverance and continuation of hard work. Barry’s advice to students of all ages is to learn ASL despite how hard it might be. Parents should learn how to sign to communicate with their Deaf/HH children. Lastly, Barry’s advice to high school students is, “Enjoy your time there, because it will fly by, and then you will be in college or work before you know it!”

Christopher Kimberly



Education:

Christopher lives in Cato, NY, a rural community less than ten minutes from the high school. He grew up in a home with a medium-sized yard and a neighbor who owns a farm. He enjoys being active and participating in outdoor activities. He once had the opportunity to climb Mount Marcy in the Adirondack Mountain region. His small town celebrated the recent opening of a Dunkin Donuts store within walking distance of school. The elementary, middle and high school buildings are all located on the same campus. The Cato-Meridian Central School District has a population of approximately 1000 students.

Christopher graduated from Cato-Meridian High School in 2015. He attended the local public school for all grades, K-12. The teachers at Cato-Meridian were very supportive of students and their academic successes. Christopher felt encouraged throughout his educational process. He said that teachers were interested in the students' well-being.

When he sees his kindergarten teacher, she still takes time to ask how he's doing and continues to provide words of encouragement for a successful future. He recommends an open communication between students and staff. Christopher also attended the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES Applied Electrical Technology program. He attended this program in tenth grade and felt that the hands-on experience working with tools complemented his learning style. His bus ride was 45 minutes long, but he filled it with reading technical and how-to electrical books.

Hearing Loss:

Christopher has a bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss. His hearing loss was detected immediately after he suffered from meningitis, which caused hearing loss in both ears. At the age of two, he had surgery on his right ear. That surgery was ineffective. He had a second surgery on his left ear at the age of three that was successful. His parents were unfamiliar with cochlear implantation.

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They spoke with other families about their experiences with cochlear implantation to better understand how the device worked and what the surgery would involve. This is a crucial step in the decision process of a positive cochlear implantation.

His amplification device is a Cochlear Freedom Processor. He is eligible for upgraded processor technology. With this new technology, he will have the option to add wireless accessories (such as the mini microphone, phone clip and the TV streamer). The device will be waterproof. (http://www.cochlear.com/wps/wcm/connect/us/home/treatment-options-for-hearing-loss/wireless-accessories)

His current processor uses zinc air batteries. "I place importance on always having extra batteries available," Christopher says. "If my batteries are dead in the processor, then I cannot hear." His hearing loss becomes more challenging on days when he is tired or has a headache. These days will require Christopher to request repetition of information more often, as it is more difficult to pay attention and focus on listening. He also used an F-M system at school. (http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/FM-Systems)

Communication:

Christopher developed speech and language skills prior to losing his hearing. His preferred communication mode is auditory-verbal. All of the members of his family are hearing, and sign language was not used. When it is noisy, he relies on lip reading and benefits from knowing the topic of conversation. Pen and paper or texting work well to convey a message if a verbal approach is not successful. His hearing friends are aware of his communication needs. He often uses his phone or Facebook messenger to communicate. If it is quiet, he is able to talk with friends using his phone. Being hands-on is a strength for Christopher; he relies on his sight in place of his hearing. He does not consider his hearing loss as a challenge, but admits there have been situations at school where he has missed out on conversations.

Support Services:

Christopher had support services from elementary through high school. The services offered him the accommodations he needed to have equal access to all listening situations. His parents played a vital role in advocating his hearing needs. They were an important part of the academic team throughout his education.

In elementary school, his support services aided him by in-servicing the staff regarding his hearing loss and training staff to properly use and care for his amplification equipment. The service providers taught Christopher communication strategies such as appropriate seating for his hearing needs in the classroom.

When he advanced into middle school, Christopher felt a sense of lost freedom when he was taken out of a class for his hearing services. However, looking back, he can see the importance those services had in developing his self-advocacy skills. "In high school, I required less support and my service providers prepared me for advocating in the work place," he said.

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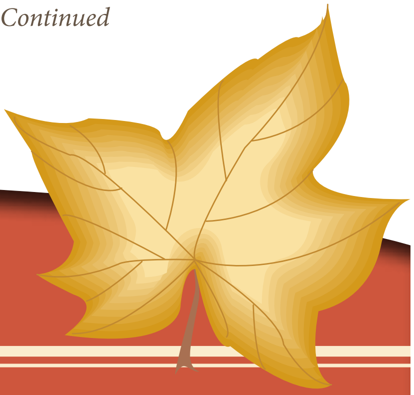
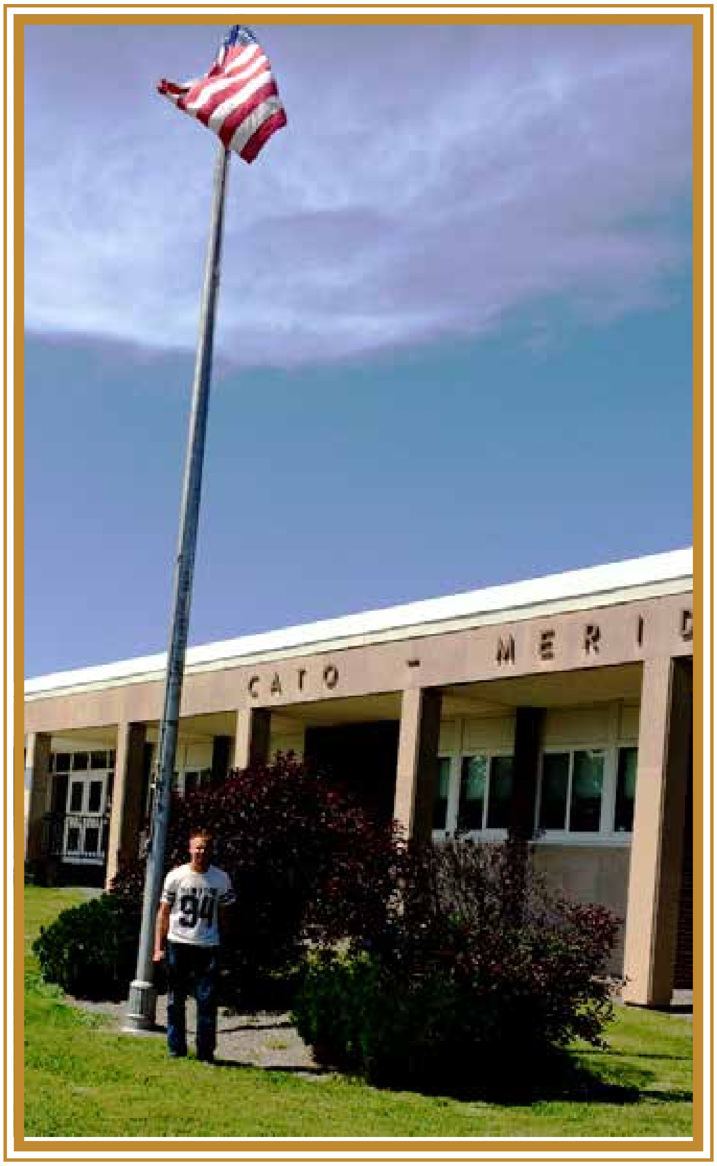


“Push yourself to move ahead!” ~Christopher

Advocacy:

“I have learned that it is important to advocate for myself in all communication situations,” says Christopher. “Also, educating others can improve my communication success.” It is sometimes necessary to explain his hearing loss, hearing technology and basic communication strategies to those unfamiliar with Christopher. He will provide communication tips such as: it is not necessary to speak loudly and he does not use sign language. It is false to assume that every Deaf/HH person knows and uses sign language to communicate. Christopher has dealt with this assumption on a few occasions in public. People assumed that because he was wearing a CI that he signed as well. These interactions have revealed to him that he has a knack for working with people, and that people are interested in learning more about deafness.

Christopher is a strong self-advocate. He has no qualms about raising his hand in class for clarification. He is also an overachiever and will research information on his own simply because he likes to learn. He attends a church in his community and chooses to sit near the front to accommodate for his hearing needs. He enjoys going to the movie theater, especially the IMAX. He does not use CC to successfully “hear” at the theater. When socializing with friends, he will ask the nearest one to clarify what is being spoken or if he missed the topic change. Sometimes he asks friends to repeat the information he had difficulty processing, especially in noisy situations. “Pronunciation is key, not volume,” says Christopher. “And it takes a lot of effort to understand speech in noise.”



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Family:

“My parents have taken time to learn about deafness and cochlear implantation,” said Christopher. “They have always taken care of my needs and have traveled many miles with me to New York City for my CI appointments. They supported me at school and helped explain my hearing loss to others.”

Christopher is very comfortable communicating with family members. He finds it easiest to communicate with people he is closest with. Conversely, his siblings may become the most annoyed with repeating information.

Christopher only has hearing on his left side because that is where his CI is located. Unilateral hearing loss makes it difficult to localize the direction of a voice. (http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Unilateral-Hearing-Loss-in-Children)

His brother-in-law came up with a communication strategy worthy of mentioning to ameliorate difficulty. He says Christopher’s name in addition to the direction that he needed to look (i.e. Christopher, behind you, Chris, by the car).

Christopher has a bed shaker alarm clock to wake him up in the morning. He does not wear his CI to bed, and he can’t hear without it. He wanted to share two stories regarding deafness and sleeping. First, his family had a dog at one point who would tend to bark during the night, waking family members. However, it never woke Christopher. “It is helpful to be deaf when you do not want your sleep to be disturbed,” he said.

Second, Christopher comes from a large family, and his brother would sometimes not think about his deafness when his parents asked him to wake Chris up. Instead of tapping him, he would walk by his room and yell, “Chris, it’s time to wake up!” His parents would have to remind him to go into his room to wake him up.

Advice/Goals:

Christopher’s role model is his older brother Dan. “He is 10 years older than me, and I have respected the life he has created for himself,” said Christopher. “His diligence in pursuing his interests has led him to become an aerospace engineer, a husband and a father. He is kind, fun to be around and likes to explore new things. He is someone to emulate.”

Christopher is undecided on which career path he is most interested in. He would like to pursue trade schools to become a journeyman and then obtain employment performing electrical work. He is currently working towards getting his driver’s license and employment near his home.

Christopher would advise, “It is important to stand up for yourself, and it is equally important for parents to support the decisions being made for their child.”

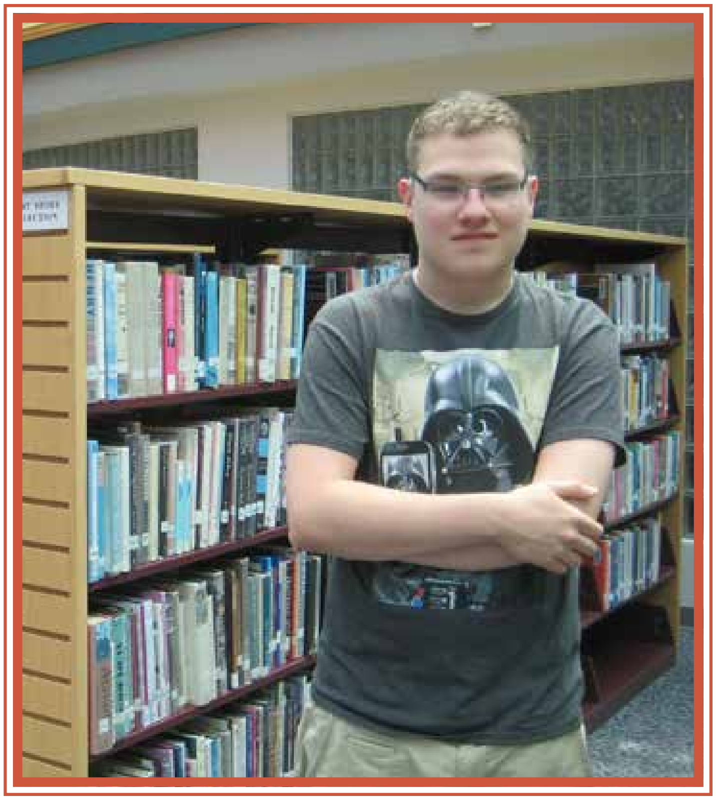
Daniel Spencer

Education:

Daniel lives in a suburb of Rochester in the town of Irondequoit when he is not attending RIT/NTID. His goal is to receive a Master's Degree in Packaging Science. He graduated in 2015 from Eastridge High School. Eastridge was named a "School of Opportunity" because of its commitment to making sure that all of its students are "College and Career Ready" as they graduate each June. Eastridge High School is one of six school buildings in the District. The District's student population is approximately 3,500.

Daniel has always attended a public school, mainstreamed with hearing peers. He has always been the only student with a hearing loss. He referred to his high school as "typical" and looking back, he wouldn't change anything. "There would be nothing I would change, because I have enjoyed all of my experiences throughout high school," he said. Daniel enjoys subjects that focus on math and technology. Daniel received 10 hours of support in his senior year from a TOD/HH Educator. An audiologist consulted with his teachers throughout high school. He also received services from an speech language pathologist in elementary school.

Daniel used an F-M system through eighth grade; after that, he preferred to use only his hearing aids. He did continue to use accommodations such as sitting up front, which made it easier to hear the teacher's voice and provided more opportunities to lip-read. Daniel also chose to wear bright red hearing aids. He would become frustrated with kids that would become angry when he did not answer them in the halls. He didn't respond, because he didn't hear them. "I decided to get red hearing aids so everyone could see that I could not hear them," he said.



Daniel participated in the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Expo for all four years in high school. The Expo is held every spring at Eastridge High School. Anyone can attend and see the projects and prototypes. During his senior year, he presented a prototype of a device developed with two other students. The device fixed broken bikes while on the road. It was a yearlong project, and the team met several times each week. This experience taught Daniel how to build prototypes.

The process starts with brainstorming for concepts/ideas.

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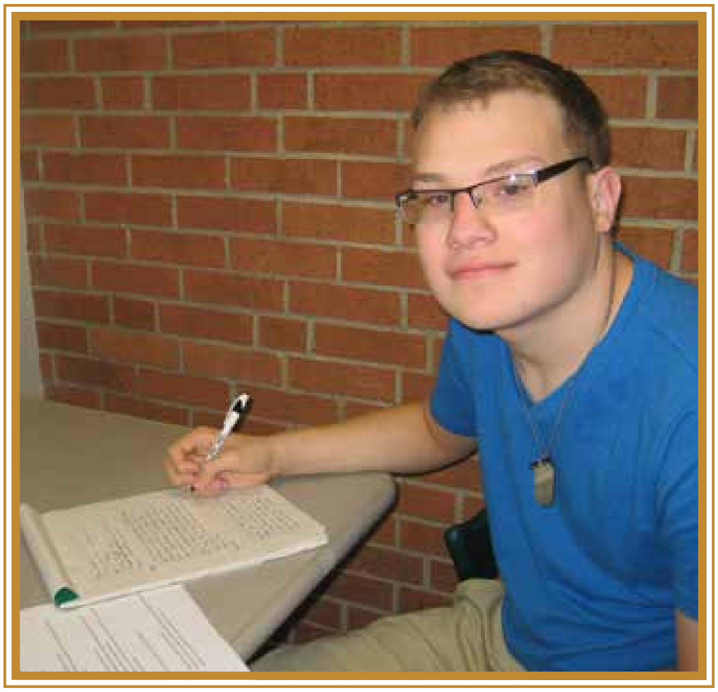
"Having a hearing loss doesn't change how I want to be treated."
~Daniel

Next, the teacher approves the concept. Then, the developing begins on a computer program called "Inventor." Following these steps, 3D models called "prototypes" are developed.

Hearing Loss/Communication:

Daniel has a bilateral, moderate sensorineural hearing loss. His hearing loss was detected at the age of three. He was immediately amplified and fitted for hearing aids in both ears. He continues to use his personal hearing aids in all social and academic settings.

His main mode of communication is auditory-verbal, but he started learning sign language from his step-father at the age of three. However, he continued to use voice only with his family. Today, Daniel communicates with sign language when talking with Deaf/HH friends who sign. His lip-reading skills vary depending on the speaker. If the person is talking fast, it is harder to lip-read. Daniel is insightful about others, which is a positive factor when choosing appropriate friendships, avoiding drama and other issues. "Having a hearing loss doesn't change how I want to be treated in everyday life and society," he says.



Daniel uses a variety of technology tools to assist with his hearing loss. He uses Skype to chat with a girlfriend and old friends from different schools. He currently uses his phone as an alarm for waking up, but soon will be switching to a bed vibrating alarm. The bed vibrating alarm will aid him in waking up on time, since he has a tendency to oversleep. Although Daniel doesn't presently use CC, he is considering giving it a try.

Advocacy:

"Equal access means every person has the same access to the same things no matter how old you are or who you are," said Daniel.

Daniel is a strong self-advocate, asking for information that he might have missed due to his hearing loss. His self-advocacy skills have given him the strength to request academic help when he needed it.

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It becomes challenging when Daniel does not realize that he missed information. He frequently relies on friends to clarify information, but if still unclear, he will email or personally ask the teacher for confirmation and/or clarification.

He uses other strategies in a classroom setting, such as sitting relatively close to the teacher and asking for a copy of the class notes, especially if he senses he has missed some information that the teacher presented. He knows it will be essential to have a note-taker when he starts taking classes at RIT. When a student is sharing information in class, Daniel will turn and face that student to ensure he hears their comment. In social situations, he often asks peers to speak louder, or if necessary, asks for clarification. He educates friends about his hearing loss by showing them his hearing aids and assuring them he is no different than them.

Family

Daniel's family has always supported him by understanding that from time to time, he will not have the ability to hear and understand every conversation. His mom is his role model, because she grew up experiencing difficult situations, and she overcame them.

"I feel like I grew up experiencing some similar things that she did," he says. "And I also overcame them with her help."

Advice:

"No matter what situation you are in, there are always people that will help you to get out of that situation, to help make everything better," says Daniel. "Life is like a baseball game, and when someone throws a curveball, you can either hit the ball out of the park, or let it strike you out."

Daniel appreciates a quote by Albert Einstein that says, "I am thankful to all those who said 'NO.' It's because of them, I did it MYSELF."

Emily Charles

Education:

Emily lives in a quiet neighborhood in Fayetteville, New York. Her hearing family is anything but quiet! She called her family loud and crazy. She has two brothers, two sisters and two dogs. Emily feels very blessed to be part of such a wonderful, caring family.

"My family has supported me by helping me through all of my problems and needs," she says. "But most importantly, they are always by my side through the good and bad times. From the moment I was diagnosed deaf until today, they are the reason why I am the person I am. They are the rock behind my successes and achievements."

Emily attends Fayetteville-Manlius High School (F-M) and is in the 11th grade. F-M is a very large, competitive school with approximately 4,600 of students. The F-M School District offers typical sports, clubs, activities and opportunities to be involved in at a variety of different levels. She hasn't always attended this type of school. Emily received Early Intervention services (EI) at home starting at the age of one. Her supports included a teacher of the deaf (TOD) and a speech language pathologist (SLP) three times per-week for one hour. She transitioned into a pre-Kindergarten classroom at Rochester School for the Deaf (RSD) with additional support services. When her family moved to the Syracuse area, Emily attended Rome School for the Deaf (NYSSD). She attended NYSSD for two years. Throughout elementary and middle school, she received different levels of support services such as an interpreter, a TOD, an SLP and currently continues with both audiology and resource services.

Emily enjoys Regents math and Spanish classes. She is taking Spanish 3R (third year Regents) where she has maintained an average of 90 or above. She takes all Regents Core classes and has achieved awards such as Student of the Month, Honor Roll and High Honor Roll. She has also participated in extracurricular activities such as gymnastics, swimming, cheerleading, dance and field hockey. Her love and compassion is for photography.

Continued

“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” ~Emily

She has experience opportunities to shadow and work as a wedding co-photographer. She was also hired to do photoshoots of memorable milestones and potential holiday greeting cards. This incredible experience has helped Emily establish a foundation motivated by desire, perfection and a love for photography.

“I wouldn’t change anything about my educational setting, because I continue to succeed with the supports that are in place and the environment that I learn and play in,” says Emily.

Emily has an educational audiologist she sees once a month to check her F-M equipment and to troubleshoot any concerns regarding her hearing loss. Although the F-M equipment is available, Emily choses to use it only in classes that are fast-paced (such as Spanish) or when the teacher has an unusually quiet or difficult-to-understand voice.

“All of my teachers are aware that I am deaf and wear bilateral Cochlear Implants (CI),” she says. “I wear my F-M system in challenged-listening classes, especially when there is loud background noise.”

Emily uses other accommodations and strategies such as preferential seating and lip-reading. She sits in the front of her classrooms and will advocate for her hearing needs by either asking the teacher for clarification during class or choosing to speak to the teacher after class in a more 1:1 setting.

Hearing Loss

Emily was born with a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Her right ear has a profound loss and her left has a moderate to severe hearing loss. This was confirmed through Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) testing, which was performed when she was 10 months old. Emily was first amplified when she was one-year-old. Both analog and digital hearing aids did not provide enough amplification for her particular hearing loss. At age four, Emily was implanted with a Cochlear Implant. However, this procedure did not provide her with enough amplification. Her family then opted for a second implant. Emily currently wears bilateral Cochlear Implants: the Nucleus 22 – BTE – Freedom 6. “My second implant was a life saver to me, and it made my life better,” she said. “I would recommend anyone thinking of getting a Cochlear Implant to get bilateral implantations.” Emily’s mom shared some of her “first time” hearing experiences: leaves rustling, toilet flushing, microwave beeping and thunder.

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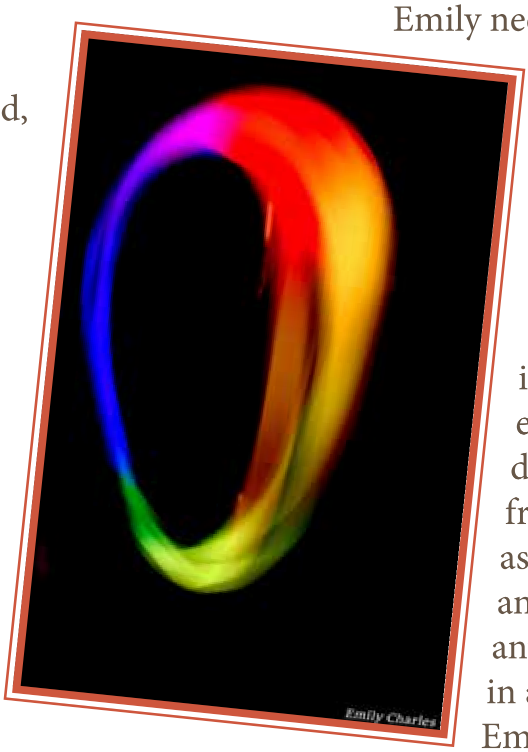
Emily didn’t know what those new sounds were as she was hearing them for the first time. She was often surprised and sometimes scared when she heard a new sound. Tracy said, “Every day Emily is still learning.”



Similar to infants/toddlers learning to name objects, sounds, feelings, etc. for the first time, it is important to give labels to new sounds that a deaf or HH person hears for the first time. That new sound needs to be paired with that label multiple times before the DHH child masters that term.

Emily, like many other DHH teens, is responsible for the care of her amplification equipment at school and at home. Emily puts her CI in a dry aid kit every night, and she always carries extra batteries with her. If her CI stops working, she is profoundly deaf.

Communication

Emily and her mom believe Total Communication (TC) is the most appropriate communication mode for Emily. Tracy recommends that parents be a part of their child’s whole learning process, not just choosing what communication method to use. Tracy stated, “If parents don’t learn how to communicate, they are isolating their child. It impairs them as an individual and affects how they feel as a person.”

Emily uses sign language when talking to her mom or deaf friends who sign. Her family felt it was important to keep sign language as a part of her communication tool kit. When Emily needs a break from the constant stimulation of her CI, her family will sign. Many of the signs they use are homemade. If Emily gets lost in a conversation, her mom will fill in the gaps, using sign and reminding the family to slow down.

Emily prefers face-to-face interactions in most situations, especially with friends. If she doesn’t understand her hearing friends, she uses strategies such as asking them to repeat the message and lip-reading; she will often try to anticipate the conversation to help fill in any missed messages. Sometimes Emily feels frustrated for being left out of conversations; It is difficult to follow conversations when in a group. Deaf/HH individuals have to work extra hard to listen.

Deaf children have to pay much more attention than children with typical hearing levels to listen. They use more of their cognitive resources in listening, lip-reading or following signed conversations, and have less energy for other things. Deaf children may be more tired at the end of a school day than their hearing siblings or friends. This fatigue may have a significant impact on their learning and development.

It is common for Cochlear Implant recipients to need breaks from their devices. “Some days I am very sensitive to the ‘hearing world,’” says Emily. “I have increased frustration and limited toleration to whatever I hear.

Continued

As a result of this, I turn off my ears (CI) and immediately feel relieved." (http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/education_for_deaf_children/education_during_school_years/tiredness.html)

When at a restaurant, Emily sits on the outside with her better ear towards the waitress. Restaurant environments are often noisy, and sitting close to where the waitress takes the order is a good strategy. It is also important to make eye contact with the waitress and make an effort to read their lips.

Emily uses a variety of technology to provide her with access: a bed vibrating alarm clock, an iPad and iPhone for messaging. Like most teens, she enjoys texting and occasional video conferencing using Skype or FaceTime, and occasionally uses closed captioning (CC) at home for movies.

Advocacy

"Equal access means that you have the same opportunities and you are treated the same as others, no matter what your deficit is," says Emily. At school, Emily advocates for her hearing needs by using her support systems like her amplification equipment, raising her hand to ask questions and relying on her support staff. Her mom regularly communicates with her teachers and attends all meetings.

When there are listening challenges in school, sports or other activities, Emily stays focused and puts as much effort as possible into attending to the speaker. "I stay focused, pay attention and look for clues from the teacher...I work hard because if I don't, I lose out on important information or instructions," she says. "I believe in keeping high expectations for myself."

Emily also says that she has learned to push through and encourage herself through challenges. She says she is never afraid to ask questions and uses her support services at school to succeed. Tracy felt Emily needed to learn self-advocacy skills and encouraged her TOD and SLP to incorporate that into her IEP goals. Emily's mother continues to encourage her to advocate for her hearing needs in all listening environments.

Advice

Emily's mom expressed that it is vital to educate others on the difference between what a Deaf/HH person hears and what they understand. "It is one of the hardest things for people without a hearing loss to comprehend," said Tracy. "Just because they heard you, doesn't mean they understood." Some factors that may interfere with understanding are: is there background noise, was the listener paying attention and is the speaker within their hearing bubble. Emily's therapists played an important role in providing resources and giving her family a "sense of direction." Emily's mom started learning sign language at Rochester School for the Deaf as soon as they discovered Emily was deaf.

Continued

She also attended workshops and classes in Syracuse and at Gallaudet University. She feels it is important to immerse yourself in deaf culture, and it is the best way to learn and fully understand. Even after Emily was implanted, her mom kept up with the signing. She feels it is necessary as a backup method for instances when technology may fail. “You have to be able to communicate with your child in all situations,” she says. Whether playing sports, swimming, bathing or during bedtime, Tracy chooses to use Total Communication with her daughter:

“Total Communication (TC) is a philosophy of educating children with hearing loss that incorporates all means of communication; formal signs, natural gestures, fingerspelling, body language, listening, lip-reading and speech. Children in TC programs typically wear hearing aids or cochlear implants. The goal is to optimize language development in whatever way is most effective for the individual child. Total Communication is truly a philosophy rather than a methodology. As a result, the implementation of the TC philosophy with one child may look entirely different than its implementation with another child.” (http://www.handsandvoices.org/comcon/index.html)

Goals

Emily’s goal after high school graduation is to attend college and pursue a major in Graphic Design with a minor in Photography. She desires to be successful in her career and her family life. “What I want people to know about me is that I am the same exact human being, I just have a different brain and ears,” she says. Emily doesn’t have just one role model, but a few; her mother Tracy and her stepfather Tom are two. “They are two of my role models, because they always believe in me, even when I don’t believe in myself,” said Emily. “They always help guide me through the good and bad times. When my father passed away, Tom accepted to step-up even more and became a big role in my life, which is being my father.”

A quote that sums up Emily’s personality is: “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” She also says, “To every single human being that is like me: just because you have a hearing loss doesn’t mean your life is over, that you’re totally different from all of your friends and family, nor is it your parent’s fault. It just means that you lost a little hearing and you need help fixing it. Also, you will get through this, because if I did and still am, then I know you can too! Remember, you have the best of both worlds!”

Kyle Sova

Education:

Kyle lives in Oswego, New York. He grew up signing with deaf parents. Kyle attended the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD) in Rome, NY for 13 years. NYSSD is a school set up for deaf students, and it offers a dormitory experience for those who choose to stay. NYSSD has programs for infants through high school; in addition, there are opportunities for college prep, career prep and vocational education (BOCES), daily living skills and fine arts. "The school has given me many great educational and real world opportunities," said Kyle. Kyle graduated in June 2015 and is currently attending RIT/NTID in Rochester, NY pursuing a career in computer engineering.

At NYSSD, Kyle resided in the dormitory during the week. He enjoyed having access to peers and staff who he could easily communicate with. There are many opportunities for the older students to be role models for the younger students. "Sometimes we read to the younger students," he said. "It is one of the advantages of having all of the deaf students together." One might think that everyone who stays in the dormitory are friends, but that is not always true. "Everyone has different personalities, so there will be people you don't get along with or find it hard to be friends with," said Kyle. The majority of students return each year until they graduate, so quite often students keep the same roommates year after year if they remain compatible.

Kyle's favorite subject was PE and his least favorite was English. He received speech and language support to enhance his language skills. They worked on lip-reading, but his main focus was on English: essay writing and the use of proper grammar such as where to place articles. Kyle is immersed in ASL both in school and his home environment. Kyle's hearing loss does not allow him to hear word endings such as /s/, /ed/, /ing/; ASL does not add them on to words, thus making it challenging to write proper English sentences.

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important roles in conveying information.

Sign language is not a universal language; each country has its own sign language and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like any spoken language, ASL is a language with its own unique rules of grammar and syntax, and it is a living language that grows and changes over time.

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ASL is used predominantly in the United States and in many parts of Canada. ASL is accepted by many high schools, colleges and universities in fulfillment of modern and “foreign” language academic degree requirements across the United States. (https://nad.org/issues/american-sign-language/what-is-asl)

Kyle participated in the Deaf Academic Bowl Competition with students from NYSSD. As a team of four students, they participated in challenges against other Deaf/HH schools. The teams competed to see who could answer the most questions correctly in the shortest amount of time. Teams travel for competitions and the socializing is a part of the experience.

Kyle is a skilled athlete and loves playing sports, especially soccer and basketball. His coach and teammates were always able to communicate with each other through sign language. They developed some secret signs such as a head or eye movement to signal the desired moves. “Most deaf people are more visual, so it was easy to read each other,” said Kyle. When players are moving, it can be more difficult to communicate with teammates and sometimes information is missed. Another challenge his hearing loss created was not being able to hear the buzzer or whistle from the referee. “Sometimes, I just kept going after the whistle blew and everyone else stopped,” he said. “It made me feel awkward.” Kyle demonstrated self-advocacy skills during a game if he didn’t understand the referee. He would ask the referee to meet with him and the coach to explain a call he didn’t understand.

Kyle also had an on-site audiologist. Audiologists are responsible for things such as performing routine hearing evaluations, educating parents, students and staff, and maintaining hearing equipment. Kyle also has an ACCESS-VR counselor who will guide him through service programs he needs to be successfully employed after high school and college. That may include support in purchasing new hearing aids, getting technology tools such as a bed vibrating alarm clock or a laptop for postsecondary education or career training. Kyle has his counselor’s name on a card in his wallet.

Communication/Advocacy:

Kyle uses bilateral hearing aids. At NYSSD, all of the classrooms are designed with sound field systems and the teachers wear a microphone. Since he attended a school for the deaf, there was no need for interpreters. NYSSD is a Total Communication school. Some students use ASL, some signed English and many spoken English. Kyle said that in the community, there are times when he requests an interpreter for something serious such as a doctor’s appointment. “It is not always a smooth process,” he says. “Sometimes it is hard to find skilled or qualified interpreters. It is the deaf individual’s right to request an interpreter for such appointments.”

Kyle prefers signing either ASL or signed English as a communication mode.

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"I learn that if you just keep going, it makes you proud when you are successful!" ~ Kyle

"Either is fine with me, because sign is very easy for me to understand," he said. "My parents are deaf and communicate by signing also." When talking to other deaf individuals, Kyle always uses sign. He also uses a person's body language, facial expressions and lip movements to help clarify the message. "I can speak well, but not perfect, and sometimes I can read lips," said Kyle. Not every deaf person can lip-read. Kyle says that lip-reading is difficult, and it helps to start learning at an early age. The person speaking can play a large role in understanding, whether they are speaking familiar words, if they are speaking clear and even if they have a mustache makes a difference.

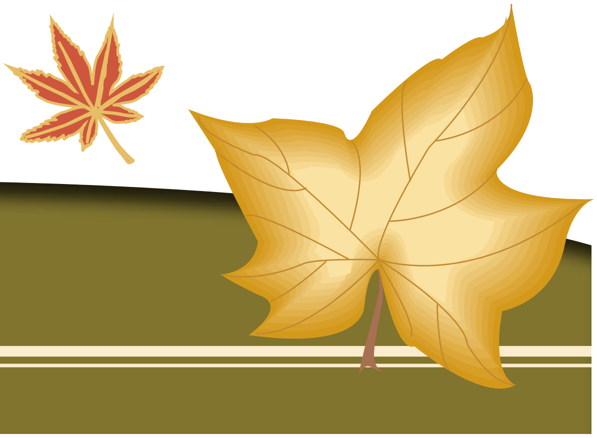
When talking to hearing friends, Kyle uses his speaking skills. If a communication breakdown occurs, then he repeats, writes or texts out his message. "It is usually OK, but sometimes I feel frustrated when I am in the community alone and people don't understand signing," he says. In other situations, Kyle was successful in advocating for his hearing loss, such as one instance in a restaurant. "The waitress tried to speak to me, but she spoke too quickly," said Kyle. I told her that I was deaf and asked her to speak slowly and look at me so that I could read her lips. It worked!" When utilizing drive-thru restaurants, Kyle stops at the speaker and says, "Hi," then pulls up to the window to hand the worker a written list of what he wants to order. Some restaurants such as Culvers in Chicago have a drive-thru access system installed for the deaf called "The OrderAssist." (http://www.inclusionsolutions.com/orderassist.html)

Goals/Advice:

Kyle is attending RIT/NTID and hopes to achieve a B.A. degree. He is undecided on his career path but is enjoying computer engineering classes. His favorite quote is, "Don't give up what you start." He has overcome many challenges with a positive attitude and head held high. "I learned that if you just keep going, it makes you proud when you are successful," he says. Kyle's role model is Matt Hamill. Matt is a deaf athlete trained in mixed martial arts and wrestling. He competed in the Light Heavyweight division in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) league. Hamill graduated from RIT and is a motivational speaker for deaf and hearing students. His challenging life was featured in a film called, "The Hammer."

"Matt is my role model, because he kept focused on his goals and he never gave up," shared Kyle. "Now he has achieved his dreams even though he is deaf."

Kyle's advice: "Never give up what you wish for, because you can do anything the same as hearing people can, but you just can't hear!"



Shanice White

Education:

Shanice White is a graduate from the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD). She first attended NYSSD at age three. She continued her education there until she graduated. Shanice graduated on June 25, 2015 along with her friend Kyle. They were the only two who graduated last year.

NYSSD is located in Rome, New York. NYSSD hosts grades Pre-K through 12th grade. The school currently enrolls approximately 60 deaf or hard of hearing students. Day students are transported from home and school daily. NYSSD students who stay overnight in the dormitories, stay Monday through Thursday night. Shanice was a day student who commuted from her home in Utica, NY. On occasion, she stayed in the dorm when she wanted to participate in activities that interested her.

Shanice's favorite subject was social studies. "I like to learn about social studies," she says. "I don't like math, because it is really hard." Shanice loves playing basketball and participating in the hand bell choir, school plays and talent shows. The hand bell choir is like a band. The students read music and ring the bells. Shanice uses her sense of touch/feel to help her play the music. According to Kathryn Baillie, her speech and language pathologist (SLP), performing in the choir and on stage is a big strength for Shanice. When signing, she is very emotional; her sign is 'big.' There are a lot of people who don't understand signing, but they do when watching Shanice act and sign. She is very visual and gets very involved.

While at NYSSD, Shanice received speech and language Services. Her school did not have interpreters, because most of the staff and students on campus were fluent in American Sign Language (ASL).

Communication:

"American Sign Language is the best way to communicate for me," says Shanice. "I don't like to speak or talk, because it is hard. I do not understand when people speak, because I can't hear them." Shanice does not read lips. It is a myth that all Deaf/HH individuals can lip-read.

Shanice uses a variety of ways to communicate with friends and family. When talking to hearing people, she writes using paper/pen or texts on her iPhone. With deaf friends, she primarily uses ASL. Another form of communication she uses frequently is video technology. For example, she uses her iPhone for video conferencing. A few apps she would recommend for video conferencing are FaceTime, Keek

Continued

"Have faith and believe in yourself!" ~ Shanice

and Tango. Shanice prefers to have Closed Captions (CC) turned on when watching T.V. CC provides access to the spoken language in the form of a written script. At home, Shanice also has a videophone.

Strength/Challenges:

Basketball has always been one of Shanice's strengths. Her love for the sport and her persistence of learning the game helped her develop into a good player. She used sign to communicate with her coach and teammates. It was often a challenge when playing in a game, because she was unable to hear the official's whistle. Shanice never gave-up, she persevered. "I did not quit," she said. "I kept playing sports." She also enjoyed the overnight basketball tournaments. "We traveled to different states, and there was a ton of socializing," she shared.

Advocacy:

Shanice advocates for herself in many ways. She uses technology to communicate with hearing individuals. Another strategy might be requesting friends to slow down or even to repeat the sign. She also likes to teach hearing friends how to sign. When going to an appointment or a job interview, Shanice will request an interpreter.

Goals:

Shanice's goal is to pursue a GED and then attend a college to study graphic design. She has also discovered that she is interested in working with children. During the summer months of 2015, Shanice worked at Camp Mark 7 in Old Forge, NY. Camp Mark 7 is a camp for deaf and HH individuals. For six weeks, Shanice's job included tasks such as leading activities, supervising deaf children and participating in field trips. (www.campmark7.org)

Shanice's role model is her Aunt Cora. "I respect Aunt Cora, because she is always nice and demonstrates positive actions," says Shanice. "She encourages me to do the same things as hearing people. She is strict, but the rules help to keep me safe and focus on what's important."

Advice/Tips:

Shanice suggests that Deaf/HH students stay in school, learn sign language and English, be social with everyone, go to college, travel to new places and see cool things. Shanice loves traveling to different places around the country, taking photos and being able to experience new and thrilling things. Her favorite place to visit is NYC. She went there for her senior trip. "I enjoyed visiting Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, which was beautiful," she said. "I was so happy to reach the top!" She also went on a boat tour and learned the history of the Twin Towers. She has considered looking for a job in NYC where transportation is readily available.

Thomas Marmon

Education:

Tom is a 2001 graduate from Central Square Central School District in Central NY. CSSD is a public school with about 4500 students. In 2001, CSHS had about 1,600 students. He is also a 2006 alumni of Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf (RIT/NTID) in Rochester, New York. NTID is one of nine colleges within RIT. Tom wanted to go to college to become an engineer, and RIT had a college for engineering. He was also able to take full advantage of all the support services for deaf students provided by NTID.

Tom received all of the typical services growing up: Early Intervention, a speech and language pathologist (SLP), a teacher of the deaf (TOD) and an interpreter. His elementary experience included participation in a self-contained Deaf/HH program and mainstreamed classes. The Center for Instruction, Technology & Innovation's (CiTi - formerly Oswego County BOCES) Deaf/HH Education Program provided all of Tom's support services. He was one of seven Deaf/HH students in the entire school. When mainstreamed, he benefited from having one or more Deaf/HH peers in the same class. Today in CNY, it is typical to find only one Deaf/HH student in a school building.

Tom's favorite subject was science, and his least preferred was English. Tom had many noteworthy achievements including honor roll, high honor roll and National Honor Society. The summer between 11th and 12th grade, Tom attended a week-long summer program at RIT/NTID called "Explore your Future. "It was very fun, and I met a lot of deaf friends," said Tom. "It helped me learn a lot about what college would be like." (https://www.rit.edu/ntid/eyf/)

In high school, Tom had an interpreter who accompanied him to every class. He also had resource/study periods with the teacher of the deaf. He continued with speech therapy weekly throughout high school to develop his oral skills. At college, he had both an interpreter and a note taker. "Having a note taker was very helpful, because I could pay attention to what the teacher was saying and not miss out by looking down to write notes," shared Tom. In addition, RIT/NTID has many deaf or hearing faculty who use sign language, which enhanced the learning experience. "Having equal access is a Deaf/HH person's right," says Tom. "To me, equal access means accessibility to the same things others have regardless of disability." (https://nad.org/issues/education/k-12/section-504-and-ada-obligations)

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"Some may think that there are mostly disadvantages to having a hearing loss, but there can be advantages too." ~ Thomas

"In regards of technology, one thing I've learned over time is that Deaf/HH people have different preferences for communication, and a 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work," said Tom. In middle school, Tom and all of his deaf classmates used phonic ear assistive listening equipment and microphones in the classrooms regardless of their level of hearing loss. Also, they all used Signed Exact English (SEE) and interpreters. In high school, they were given the choice to continue using assistive listening equipment or use their personal hearing aids; most of them chose the latter. Some chose not to use any assistive devices at all. Also, they continued to use SEE and interpreters.

Going into a college with a large deaf population with such a large spectrum of hearing loss levels, Tom quickly saw that there were many different styles of sign language; some relied completely on oral skills, and there was a tremendous variety of technological devices embraced by deaf individuals. Most learned what worked best for them while growing up. Tom thinks giving an individual the opportunity and flexibility early on to try different communication methods and experience a variety of technology helps the individual discover the best fit for their specific needs. However, he feels it is critical that the school systems and Deaf/HH education programs expose children and parents to all of these choices during the K-12 school years. Since some parents may not know where or how to do this, he thinks it is important for Deaf/HH education teachers to stay up-to-date and provide as many opportunities as possible.

Hearing Loss:

Tom has a severe to profound sensorineural (SNHL) bilateral hearing loss, first detected at 18 months. At age two, Tom was fitted with behind-the-ear (BTE) hearing aids. "I wore BTE hearing aids during school, at home and in the community," said Tom. "I continue to wear my hearing aids all day, from when I wake-up until I go to sleep."

Tom said, "Some may think that there are mostly disadvantages to having a hearing loss, but there can be advantages too. One shortcoming is feeling left out of group conversations. Feeling left out can make me feel alone, but I try not to let it change my day. On the other hand, sometimes at work, I am with a group of co-workers in loud environments. My co-workers have a hard time hearing each other, but I have no problems, because I can simply read lips and understand them. My co-workers enjoy being able to say something to me 20 feet away in a loud environment, and all I need to do is read their lips. My hearing co-workers can't do that!"

One of Tom's strengths is that he is a very detail-oriented person. "This strength was partly developed due to my hearing loss," he says. "I am less distracted than hearing people and this helps me to focus better."

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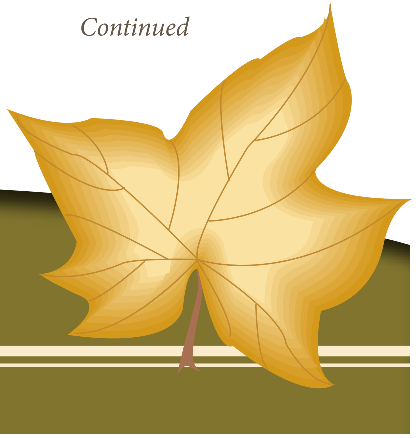

Communication:

Tom prefers a mix of Signed Exact English (SEE), American Sign Language (ASL), oral and lip-reading when communicating. At work, he relies on both oral and lip-reading skills. At home and in the community, he uses all of them. If his hearing friends know sign language, then they communicate using sign language and oral at the same time. With deaf and hard of hearing friends, Tom uses all three modes. Even within the deaf community, there are different preferred methods for communication such as SEE, ASL and Cued Speech. It varies from individual to individual.

SEE, Signed Exact English, is a language system that provides a visual counterpart to match both spoken and written English. It is often used in combination with speech and/or auditory training, and in simultaneous communication programs. The use of SEE does not exclude the use of ASL or other sign languages or sign systems. In fact, roughly 75% of the signs in SEE are the traditional signs that are common to all sign languages or sign systems used in the United States, i.e. ASL, PSE, CASE, Signed English. (http://www.handsandvoices.org/comcon/index.html)

Cued Speech is a visual mode of communication that uses hand shapes and placements in combination with the mouth movements of speech to make the phonemes of a spoken language look different from each other. (http://www.cuedspeech.org/cued-speech-definition.php)

"One thing I have learned very well is that we (deaf and hard of hearing individuals) are really the ones who need to show and teach hearing individuals the best way to communicate with us in social situations," shares Tom. "Do not assume everyone already knows. The first time I am in a social situation with someone I am not familiar with, I just make a simple and quick statement in the beginning that I am deaf but can read lips and that it helps to look at me when talking. Then, I continue on with the conversation as normal. It helps to confront the issue with a quick and straightforward statement. I find it helps people realize my situation, and they tend to be very accommodating."

Family:

Growing up, Tom's family has always supported him. His parents and sister all know sign language. "They never treated me differently, because I couldn't hear," he said. "They always encouraged me to be successful regardless of my deafness." In addition to knowing sign language, they learned to speak a little slower so that Tom was able to see their lips. Tom's mom (Pam) stated that Tom started early intervention at two years and four-months-old. "His teacher was my teacher as well," she said. "I learned sign along with Tom so we could work on the signs together, usually one or two each week." Tom and his family were learning sign before he learned oral speech. This improved their communication and his behavior immensely, because once he realized the hand movements were meant to communicate, his frustration level dropped.

By learning sign and realizing he could communicate his needs, he would relax and be able to learn speech easier.

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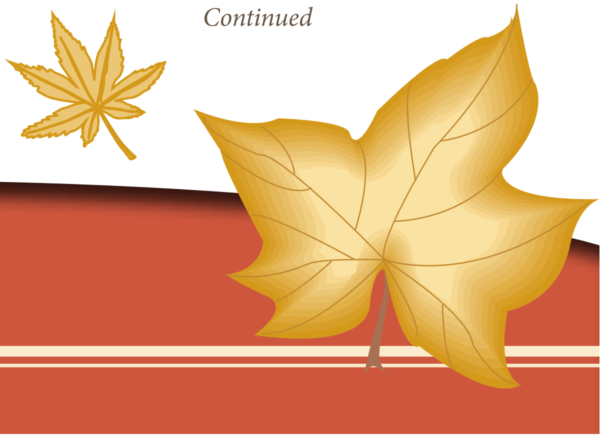


Tom's mother would recommend this to all parents of children with hearing loss, even those with cochlear implants, because when the listening devices are off, the children are deaf."

Tom resides in Raleigh, North Carolina with his wife and two children. His wife is also deaf and has bilateral cochlear implants. She is versed in sign language and cued speech. His daughter is hearing, but she loves to sign all the time. Her favorite sign is "dirty." Tom's son can also hear, and his sister is looking forward to teaching him his first signs. Tom is a product engineer at CommScope. His job includes designing and inventing products that are used to connect fiber optic cables for cable/internet/phone companies in outside environments (aerial, above ground, below ground, underwater, etc.).

Technology:

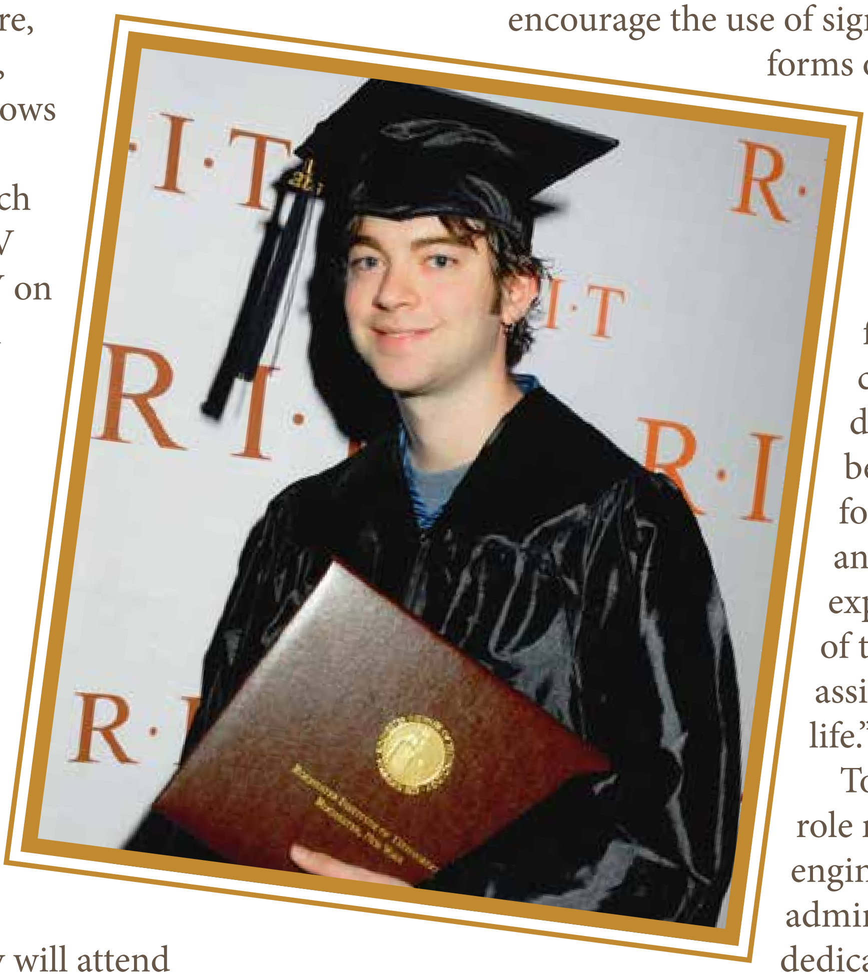
As an adult, Tom relies on a variety of technology tools to stay connected with his family who live in New York. They often communicate through text messaging, email and video phone conferencing. His extended family does not know sign, but they do know to speak slow and face him while talking.

Technology is continuing to evolve and many devices have improved daily living for individuals with hearing loss. Tom utilizes several types of technology at home to support his hearing loss. He uses closed captioning/subtitles when watching television and movies. He has a Sonic Boom SB1000 alarm clock to wake him up in the morning; It shakes the bed using a vibrator that sits under the mattress and also flashes a lamp on and off. He also has a door bell that flashes a light inside the house to notify him that someone is at the door and a strobe-light fire alarm. Another device he uses is a video phone and relay services. The device is a Sorenson VP200 that hooks up to the TV and allows Tom to make video relay calls. This is an essential tool used at work in order for Tom to be effective in his job. In addition, many smart phones today have apps for video conferencing, which makes communication more convenient. He uses FaceTime, Skype and nTouch (Sorenson VP) on his smart phone and computer. Finally, Tom has a daughter who is under two-years-old and a son who is two-months-old. To help Tom and his wife wake up if one of the children cries at night, they use a baby alert monitor that works wirelessly with their alarm clock. When it picks up sound, it will vibrate the bed and flash the lamp.

Tom's mother, Pam, treasures every trip to North Carolina to visit Tom and his family. She observed Tom and Nikki using their phones in a way hearing people don't need to. They carry their phones all the time and sometimes use them to communicate with each other if in other rooms of the house.

Continued

Both Tom and Nikki talk to their children all the time. One interesting story was when Claire was little, their pediatrician recommended that Nikki keep the TV on for background speech noise. They do not have the TV on a lot and really, Claire, like most children, has her favorite shows and then doesn't really pay that much attention to the TV otherwise. The TV on in the background can supplement her learning of incidental phrases or idioms and overall increase in language acquisition. "Her speech is coming along, and I can understand her more and more the longer I am with her," said Pam. She probably will attend preschool at age three like her cousins (they are hearing, with a deaf mom and hearing dad) but not receiving any special speech services.



Advice:

"Communication is always an important skill to have," says Tom.

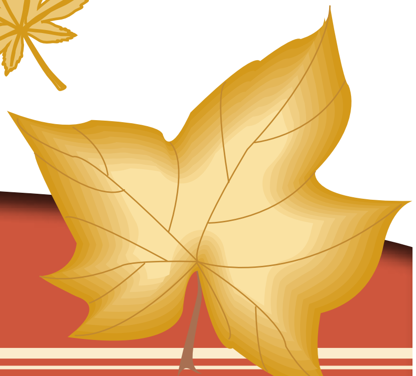
To Deaf/HH students, Tom advises: "Do not be discouraged or intimidated by having a hearing loss. It truly does not limit you from doing what you want to do. Never think your hearing loss as something that will get in the way of anything you want to do. I have met deaf people who are doctors, actors, people who work for the government, etc."

For families, Tom encourages: "Always work to remove any communication barriers and encourage the use of sign language or any other forms of communication."

For educators, Tom recommends: "Consistently expose Deaf/HH students and their families to new and current technological development. It would be extremely beneficial for Deaf/HH students and their families to be exposed to an assortment of technology that could assist them with everyday life."

Tom's grandfather is his role model. He is a retired engineer, and Tom always admired his balance and dedication to work, family, friends and self.

One of Tom's favorite quotes is by Albert Einstein, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."



Audiological Testing Chart

This chart explains the different evaluations audiologists perform, to determine hearing loss.

Pure Tone Audiometry (PTA)

is the key hearing test used to identify hearing threshold levels of an individual, enabling determination of the degree, type and configuration of a hearing loss. Thus, providing the basis for diagnosis and management. Ages: 4 and up. Most children younger than 4 are not able to provide reliable data for a complete evaluation.

Conditioned Play Audiometry

can be used as the child matures and is commonly used with toddlers and preschoolers (ages 2–5). The child is trained to perform an activity each time a sound is heard. The activity may involve putting a block in a box, placing pegs in a hole, or putting a ring on a cone.

Visual Reinforcement Audiometry is the method of choice for screening children between 6 months and 2 years of age. The child is trained to look toward a sound source. When the child gives a correct response (e.g., looking to a source of sound when it is presented), the child is "rewarded" through a visual reinforcement. Example rewards include getting to watch a toy that moves or a flashing light.

Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR)

Test gives information about the inner ear (cochlea) and brain pathways for hearing. This test is also sometimes referred to as auditory evoked potential (AEP). The test can be used with children or others who have a difficult time with conventional behavioral methods of hearing screening. The ABR is also indicated for a person with signs, symptoms, or complaints suggesting a type of hearing loss in the brain or a brain pathway.

Otoacoustic Emissions (OAEs) are sounds given off by the inner ear when the cochlea is stimulated by a sound. When sound stimulates the cochlea, the outer hair cells vibrate. The vibration produces a nearly inaudible sound that echoes back into the middle ear. The sound can be measured with a small probe inserted into the ear canal. People with normal hearing produce emissions. Those with hearing loss greater than 25–30 decibels (dB) do not produce these very soft sounds. The OAE test is often part of a newborn hearing screening program. This test can detect blockage in the outer ear canal, as well as the presence of middle ear fluid and damage to the outer hair cells in the cochlea.

By Amy M. Bradbury, Au.D. CCC-A

Check your knowledge of the following terms:

Equal Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

http://phb.secondsensehearing.com/content/equal-access-deaf-and-hard-hearing

Hearing Loop

Magnetically transmits sound via hearing assistive technology using telecoils (T-coils).
http://www.hearingloop.org

International Sign for Deafness

This sign posted at a business or community event means that there are services available for the deaf or hard of hearing.

International Sign for Deafness

CODA

Children of Deaf Adults.
http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/coda.htm

Hearing Socks for your Listening Device

A “cool” way to protect your hearing device from moisture.
http://www.gearforears.com/products

Find a digital copy of the Central New York Deaf/HH Teens Magazine online at www.CiTiboces.org/ExceptionalEducation

New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD)– Shanice, Kyle

Central Square - Thomas

Mexico Academy - Charlene

Livonia Central - Barry

Fayetteville-Manlius - Emily

Cato-Meridian - Christopher

Eastridge HS – Daniel

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