

*Central New York*

2020 DEAF/HH  
TEENS

*"Equal access is the spring that awakens the blooms of knowledge and nourishes success."*

Charlotte Hall

*6<sup>th</sup> Edition*

# Dear Readers

We are proud to present the 6th edition of Central New York Deaf/ HH Teens. The creation of this publication followed a similar process as the previous magazines: recruiting interested students, having those participants complete an extensive questionnaire, drafting and editing their personal stories, edition photos, and crafting pages. This process involves extensive collaboration in which to produce this diverse educational resource.

Our purpose for publishing our own magazine is to highlight the talented Deaf and hard of hearing teens from across New York State, as well as to expand one's knowledge regarding deafness. This magazine's primary focus is to support Deaf/ HH students, their families and educators.

*Best Wishes.*

*Supervisor*

**Lisa Phinney**

**Teacher of the Deaf/ HH**

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Technology & Innovation (CiTi)  
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*A special  
"Thank You" to:*

Julie Landy  
Shelley Majka  
Charlotte Hall

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# Arif Cajic



My name is Arif Cajic and I am 18 years old. I live in an amazing city called Utica. Utica has many refugees, as it is an immigrant community. Many people come from other countries to Utica. There are several people who live in Utica that are deaf that attend the New York State School for the Deaf. Utica is an amazing city because they have many of their own international restaurants and many cultures.

## EDUCATION:

My school name is the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD) and I am a senior there. NYSSD has about 60 students. NYSSD has dorms that every resident student lives in. These are students that live two, three or even four hours away because many NYSSD students live far away. Students at NYSSD use sign language and some speak to communicate. The teachers use sign language and speak when they are teaching. NYSSD has an audiologist, speech and language pathologists, school counselor, school psychologist, occupational therapist, and a physical therapist. I have been a student at NYSSD, since I was 2.5 years old!

My favorite subject is social studies. The reason social studies is my favorite subject is because I love to listen and hear what happened throughout history. While I was a freshman, I did a big project related to the 2016 Presidential Election. I also take many elective classes at NYSSD such as digital photography, yearbook, current events, band, writing, CPR and first aid, American Sign Language, and transition to adulthood. I also participate in extracurricular activities such as Academic Bowl (2016-20), Close-Up (2018-19), and Student Council

(2016). The Academic Bowl is a competition that covers many topics, such as: current events, math, science, social studies and more. It is a team that answers questions in a Jeopardy-style event. Academic Bowl will be always in my heart!

The purpose of Close-Up is to engage and inspire every person to find their voice related to government. I got the opportunity to go on an amazing trip to Washington, D.C. from May 5-10, 2019. I would love to go back to Washington. The third extracurricular activity that I did is Student Council. The fourth extracurricular activity that I did last summer of July 2019, was that I went to the best summer camp at RIT called Explore Your Future (EYF).

If I could change one thing about my educational setting it would be having more deaf students to come to NYSSD.

At school and in my community I do use amplification. My amplification is a Cochlear Implant. I love to hear and use my CI at home to communicate with my family. I use a classroom sound field system at NYSSD.

While attending school I've been recognized with a number of awards: Honor Roll, Merit Roll, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (2019), Student of the Month (2017), Participation on NYSSD Academic Bowl Club (2016-19), Participation on NYSSD Academic Bowl Team (2016-19), Triple "C" Award (2019), Academic Perseverance, 2018 Charactership Program, Academic Perseverance in History, Academic Perseverance in Math and Close Up Participation (2019).

## HEARING LOSS:

The level and type of hearing loss I have is profound sensorineural hearing loss bilaterally. It was detected when I was 18 months old. I was first amplified when I was two years old. I've had three upgrades with my Cochlear Implant on my hearing journey. I got the latest upgrade with the Cochlear Implant Nucleus 7 during July 2019. I felt excited and blessed that I can hear much better with my new Cochlear Implant that I got last summer. I feel fine about my hearing loss, being a young deaf Bosnian man and I love to be deaf. There is nothing wrong with my deafness. Deaf people can do anything except hear.

## COMMUNICATION:

The mode of communication that works best for me is American Sign Language in school. Sometimes I use signed English and talk. I don't

use an interpreter because NYSSD has all students and staff sign to make accessible learning. At home I use sign language and speak English with my two brothers and my mom. I speak Bosnian to communicate with my dad.

My best way to communicate with hearing friends is via written communication and texting. I do best communicating with my deaf/hard of hearing friends in ASL. When I am doing activities in public, such as shopping, I write to communicate with hearing people.

## STRENGTHS/CHALLENGES:

One of the challenges that I have faced as result of my deafness is when I joined karate. I was in karate for almost four years and there is no interpreter. I didn't use the Cochlear Implant during my karate practice, and it was absolutely hard and a big struggle to communicate with my hearing teammates and coaches. I overcame this by my teammates being excited that I taught them sign language. I was very blessed to teach them and I am incredibly lucky. I've learned about myself that I CAN DO IT! I will always believe in myself.

## SUPPORT SERVICES:

My support service at school have been that NYSSD has teachers of the deaf and special educators that teach classes. We have speech language pathologists and we have an audiologist. I also have used many kinds of technology that support my hearing loss. I use Closed Captioning to watch any news and I use FaceTime to communicate with my friends. I also use a Sorenson videophone to communicate. That way is easier to have language accessible for me.

## ADVOCACY:

I believe that I have "equal access" at NYSSD because we have requirements the same as in a public school. NYSSD students have to take state tests, such as Regents exams. I do advocate for my hearing needs at school and in the community. An example of this is if I run out of batteries, I would go to an NYSSD audiologist or speech and language pathologist to get batteries. Also, I advocate for myself in social situations with hearing peers by writing with my peers if I cannot hear very well. I will also text with my friends if I can not hear them very well.

## GOALS:

My goals after high school are that I want to go to RIT/NTID because the city of Rochester has a large deaf community. The second college I want to go to is MVCC because I might want to stay local. After high school, I want to study political science.





## FAMILY:

My family has always supported my hearing loss. My family is familiar with deafness because I have two relatives that are profoundly deaf on my dad's side. Both my aunt and my aunt's husband on my dad's side are deaf. My parents made the major decision to get a Cochlear Implant for me before I was old enough to decide. I feel that I am able to communicate effectively with my immediate family. I do feel able to communicate with my aunt on text in Bosnian language. Also, I can kind of communicate with my deaf aunt and my aunt's husband who use Bosnian sign language to communicate.

## MORE INFORMATION:

I want people to know that I know three languages: English, American Sign Language and Bosnian. Also, there is an amazing fact about me, that my parents are immigrants and they moved to the United States from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the late 1990s. Also, my favorite colors are black and light blue.

My favorite quote that best sums up my personality is "keep fighting until you reach your goals." That quote inspires me because I have to work hard to reach my goals. All deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people have potential to reach their goals.

The role model in my life is my mom. She is one of my best friends and she is always there for me. Also, I want to thank her for making the best decision to put me in school at NYSSD. My mom makes the best decisions for my family and I hope someday I will also make the best decisions for my future family.

## ADVICE:

My advice to students with a hearing loss is to never give up if you have challenges. Everyone has challenges. My advice for families who have a child who has a hearing loss, please have them go to deaf school!



*"Keep fighting until you reach your goals."*



# Jonathan Allen

My name is Jonathan Allan. I am 18 years old and I live in Little Falls near a waterfall. I live in a lovely city.

## EDUCATION:

I started school in Loma Vista Elementary in California when I was 5, then moved to New York when I was 12 and went to New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD). My favorite subject is outdoor power equipment because I love working on small engine repair. I take Outdoor Power Equipment at BOCES. I also take transition to adulthood and yearbook. I participate in basketball, softball, and soccer. I used to do track and Pop Warner football. I really enjoy Motocross, and wish NYSSD had football and hockey. NYSSD does not have enough students to have those sports.

At school, home and in the community I use hearing aids. I received the most improved student award from my BOCES program last year. I also received most valuable player (MVP) for basketball.

## HEARING LOSS:

My hearing loss is moderate to severe sensorineural hearing loss bilaterally. It was detected when I was about 3 years old. I was amplified using hearing aids when I was 3. I feel great because all my friends in school are deaf and I can communicate with them.

## COMMUNICATION:

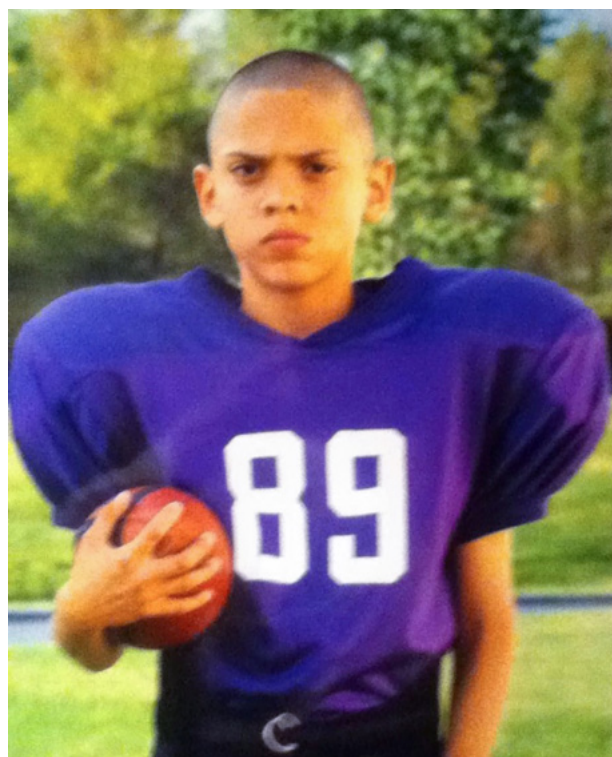
I talk in most of my classes, but I do use sign language sometimes. I use my voice only at home or in public.

## STRENGTHS/CHALLENGES:

In sports it's a challenge because I'm running on the field and my coach is trying to call me but I can't hear. I overcome this by looking at the coach a couple times to make sure everything was good. I have learned that I can be myself. I learned that I can pass my Regents exams. I had to challenge myself through school and Regents examinations.

## SUPPORT SERVICES:

We have a speech language pathologist, audiologists and front row sound field systems at school to help me to hear better. I wear two hearing aids. The school has a sound field system to help me hear teachers when they talk. I use a phone for texting to communicate, too.







*"Just do it!"*



## ADVOCACY:

NYSSD gives me equal access at school but I still have to advocate for myself. I'll go to my audiologist and ask for a battery when I need one. I move closer to people when they are talking. I look at their mouth to help me understand what they are saying.

A strategy I use with other people is that I have my phone and go to the note section and type to communicate.

## GOALS:

My goal is to get a job and have my own house.

## FAMILY:

My family supported me by putting me in NYSSD. My mom makes appointments for me, and takes care of everything I need at home. I can communicate with my family very well.

## MORE INFORMATION:

I want people to know that I was born on the west coast in California. A quote that sums up my personality is: "Just do it," telling us to just do your thing the best you can.

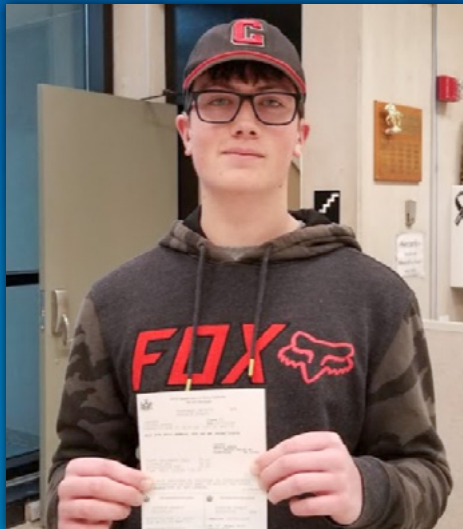
My role model is Ashley Fiolek because I always look up to her and she has the same hobbies as I do.

## ADVICE:

Family is the only thing you are ever going to need because they are always going to be on your side.



# Maddox Garvey



## INTRO/ EDUCATION:

I live about 20 minutes outside of Syracuse near Bridgeport. It's considered a hamlet in the town of Sullivan in Madison County. It's a small and quiet neighborhood but close enough to Syracuse and Chittenango to be there in a matter of minutes.

I am 16 years old as of October, so I have my permit and I'm trying to practice my driving as much as I can. I am a junior, mainstreamed at Chittenango High School. It's a smaller public school district with about 600 students in grades nine through 12. The faculty and administration have been extremely supportive and responsive to my needs and have helped me to be successful in school.

When I was younger, I started out at the Park Hill Pre-K in the East Syracuse-Minetto School District. There, I attended a class structured for deaf and hard of hearing students through OCM BOCES. My parents decided BOCES was the right program to help me in the areas I needed it, so I continued in the BOCES program in the Solvay Central School District. There I started out in the deaf and hard of hearing room and slowly became fully mainstreamed. The BOCES program and the Solvay district were a great experience and contributed to my success that allowed me to transfer to my home district of Chittenango when I entered eighth grade.

Although I don't have a favorite subject in school, I do enjoy learning new things in all my classes. I have an appreciation for history, and enjoy researching historical figures and events to learn more about them.

I love taking electives to round out my regular required classes. I recently completed a course called "Be an 11 Leader" which is for students who want to learn what being a leader is all about: setting a good example and being a better person by staying positive and focused on your dreams.

My main activity outside of school is baseball. I've played since third grade in little league and school ball, which I continue to play. I also play on a travel baseball team, the Syracuse Jr. Chiefs. My positions include third base and pitcher, but I'm always open to play where my team needs me. I take every opportunity to participate in clinics, games, practices and have even gone to RIT to workout with its coaches and sharpen my skills. I spend about 12 hours a week at practices in the winter and when the spring comes that will increase. I love the team aspect of baseball and enjoy the hours I put into it; it's fun for me. When I'm not playing baseball, I like to golf, go four-wheeling, spend time with my family and friends, fish, and play board games with my family.

I am happy with my educational setting; I've been provided the tools and support I need to succeed. I'm very fortunate for that.

When I was young, I learned ASL in order to communicate with my peers who used that as a method of communication and I also used an interpreter in the



class room. Even though my hearing loss is profound, I prefer to be vocal and use as much auditory communicating as possible. Although it's challenging, I've found that it works best for me. In school I used to have an interpreter but now use closed captioning. My teachers use hearing assistive technology: they wear a microphone, a multimedia hub for the smartboard, computer and tablet. At home, I communicate with my family verbally and use closed captioning for the television.

## HEARING LOSS:

I was born with a severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss and wear binaural hearing aids. Due to my enlarged vestibular aqueducts (or EVA) my hearing loss can fluctuate, which can be scary. There have been times I wake up in the morning and notice something is different, my hearing has changed, and the hearing aids are not as helpful. Sometimes after a few days or a week my hearing comes back to where it was and sometimes it doesn't. I was two years old when I was fitted for my first pair of hearing aids, Oticon. I remember it being a challenge and a big change to get used to, a shock almost. But I adjusted quickly and started to realize what a difference they made for me. People used to think I was always so serious, sometimes they still do. I think it's because I'm always watching people for queues like facial expressions and body language in addition to trusting my hearing aids to make sure I'm not missing something in the conversation. Trust me, I'm a prankster otherwise! As I've gotten older, I started using Phonak hearing aids which have worked very well for me and provide another level of technology that I like.

When it comes to my hearing loss, I look at it as a part of who I am. I was born with it, so I don't really know the difference. As I've gotten older, I'm better at self-advocating and letting people know if I didn't hear or understand them but I've never been embarrassed or bothered by it. I've always picked out bright colors and designs when it's come to my earmolds, which tend to attract attention rather than hide it. It's who I am.

## COMMUNICATION:

My general communication preference is vocal and auditory. I do use ASL or refer to my closed captioning if I need to, but most of the times I prefer being vocal. I've never really had a challenge communicating with my hearing friends since I prefer being vocal, but I can switch to ASL with a deaf or hard of hearing friend who might prefer to communicate that way.

## STRENGTHS / CHALLENGES:

When I was little, I was much less confident. Not in a physical way, I've never really been bothered about people seeing I wear hearing aids. It was more about not knowing things. People don't realize how much is picked up by just being in a room when people are talking, and they just hear certain things that set a comfort level. Like when plans change. I used to get anxious if my parents told me we were going to the store and then decided we needed to stop for gas first, I would get upset. It's not what I expected, it wasn't the plan. I would get nervous if I got too far from my parents or siblings when we were at a store or restaurant.

My family took the time to learn the things that deaf and hard of hearing

people experience and would make sure they let me know ahead of time if things changed. They would sit and talk me through a scenario and what I would need to do. My parents would encourage me to be more independent and when I did, I realized nothing bad happened and that I could handle those situations. That really helped me to relax and gain confidence.

I still experience challenges with being hard of hearing, mostly at school. For example, when learning new vocabulary or terms that I may not have clearly understood, sometimes I don't know what I may have missed so reviewing notes and saying I don't understand is important. Sports, friends and family have not been as big of a challenge because I have been raised to have a BIG sense of humor. I have to look at these situations as a learning experience for next time and ways to work through them. Most people are patient and don't mind repeating or rephrasing what they are saying. I have learned to not be afraid to keep asking someone until I understand them.

## SUPPORT SERVICES:

My support services currently consist of using Phonak Roger X receivers with a touchscreen microphone the teachers wear. There is a multimedia hub as well. This allows me to better access the teacher's voice and other students' voices when the microphone is used in group mode. I also have a captionist and use the CPrint technology. The sign language really gave me the confidence I needed in the classroom to be able to look at my interpreter and make sure I was understanding instruction from my teachers. As I got older, I would say the most critical support has been the microphone the teachers wear, and I can also use it in a group setting since the voices stream directly to my hearing aids. That has made me the most comfortable that I am not missing things and I can communicate directly with my peers.

## ADVOCACY:

I have always felt comfortable at school and never really felt I was at a disadvantage. I can't look at it that way. I have to persevere and stand up for myself if I'm feeling lost or behind in a classroom. Typically, I will ask for clarification at that moment; sometimes I wait and talk with the teacher after class. I also make sure I have study halls worked into my schedule and spend the time getting together with my teachers to go through the classwork or bring up anything I'm not sure about. In social settings, I will speak up if I'm not understanding the discussion or if it's not the right time, I will ask someone I'm with to help explain what I may have missed. If my hearing aid batteries die, I let the teacher know and they allow me to immediately change them. I've been in a situation where I'm out with my family and we forgot to bring extra batteries, so I make do until we can change them.

## GOALS:

After high school, I have my sights set on college. I'm getting interested in engineering, so I'm taking every opportunity to find out more about that field. I've been to RIT for a campus tour and really like what they have to offer. They seem to focus on inclusion and allow flexibility when it comes to degrees. They also have an impressive engineering department.

## FAMILY:

My family has been extremely supportive to me and my journey in life with hearing loss. I have an older sister, Alayna, and an older brother, Zane. They don't treat me any different and have always included me in everything they do. My brother and sister are very supportive of me. We also have two dogs that make my life interesting!

My parents have made themselves available to understand how they could help me and gain an understanding of what I experience having a hearing loss. They have pushed for me to be in the right programs, with the right teachers and to have the right equipment to use. They make sure I stay open-minded about trying new technology if it will help me. Although at the end of the day they have made some final decisions, they have always made sure I was part of the discussion.

My parents have always made me part of the conversations and decisions when it came to me and my hearing loss. They take the time to explain things to me, do research, attend every meeting, and are proactive to ensure I have the best future available for me. I am comfortable with my home life and how we all communicate. They are patient with me, and we get laughing sometimes at what I thought I heard.

## MORE INFORMATION:

I think it's fair to say I'm determined. If I want something, I work hard for it. I am not satisfied with no for an answer, not in a bad way but in a positive way. I'm inquisitive and want to understand people and how things work. I try to learn from my mistakes and make the best of every situation. I like to help those around me and encourage them to be the same.

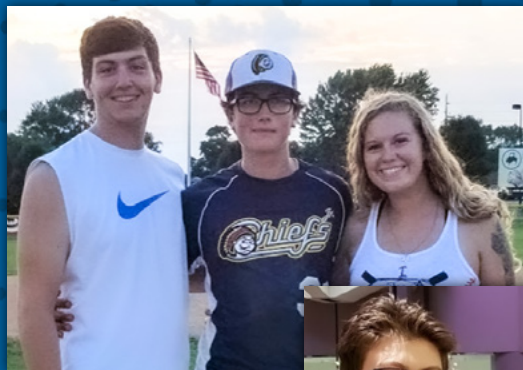
I really love all types of music from classic rock to rap. I think it's a great way people use to express themselves, their experiences, and what's going on in the world.

One person I admire and look up to is Jackie Robinson. Not only was he a great baseball player, but he persevered at a time that the world was not always kind or appreciative of him. He carried himself with dignity and didn't let the negativity he experienced stop him from doing what he wanted to do. One quote I admire is, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."

## ADVICE:

I can only give advice to those most like me, with the same level of a hearing loss. I don't know what it's like to be deaf, but for those who are hard of hearing stay true to your dreams, stay motivated, and do the things that make you happy. Pursue what makes you happy to create a future that you love. Surround yourself with positivity and block out any negativity. Don't be afraid to speak for yourself, and let your voice be heard no matter how you prefer to communicate. For those families, support your loved one and do your best to understand them. Sometimes the best way is to just listen to them.

*"A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."*





# Mariah McConnell



My name is Mariah McConnell, I am 18 years old and a Senior at Pulaski High School. I live in a small community of approximately 2,300 people.

## EDUCATION:

Pulaski Jr-Sr High School is a public school. I have been a student there since 2007. The high school is small, about 353 students. The student to teacher ratio is 20 to 1.

My favorite subject is math because it comes very easy to me. I like challenging myself and building upon my problem-solving skills. I have also participated in concert band, marching band, pit band, jazz band and have taken multiple art classes throughout my school years.

As far as extracurricular activities, I have participated in multiple youth sports during my elementary and middle school years. Some of these included: Little League baseball, basketball, and soccer.

I played on the varsity soccer team for all four years of high school. I was named co-captain for my senior year. I also played on the varsity basketball team and will be running on the varsity track team in my senior year. Currently, I am treasurer of the Art Club as well. I'm also part of Pulaski's concert and marching band, in which I have been a section leader and this year I will be a majorette. I'm in National Honor Society, and I was inducted during my junior year of high school.

I have several other honors that I am proud of. I have received the State Senate Youth Leadership Award, four High Honor academic awards, four John Ben Snow Incentive awards, the highest grade in US History Monday Club Scholarship, two-time winner of Food Allergy Research and Education scholarship to attend their conference and first place in graphic

design for Pulaski's Artist of the Year Art Show.

If I could have changed one thing about my educational setting it would be to have qualified for Teacher of the Deaf (TOD) services. I would have liked these services so I could gain advocating strategies that could be used throughout my life.

My story is unique because I have a brother who has bilateral hearing loss and has received TOD services since he was six. My brother is now 15 and has awesome communications skills. He is not afraid to speak up or converse at all in social and academic settings. I tend to be different from my brother in that I have to be very comfortable in situations and my surroundings in order for me to be vocal.

I look at this as one of my weaknesses. I credit the early intervention Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing services he has received and is still receiving for his strong voice and lack of fear in advocating for himself in the realm of his daily hearing needs.

Depending on the setting, I wear a hearing aid and I have an FM system that I use to help me to hear better.

I have unilateral moderate to severe hearing loss in my left ear. It was detected in 2015 at the age of 13. However, I have had ear issues since four months old. I had several sets of short- and long-term tubes, which resulted in complications creating mild hearing loss in elementary school. Then at age 10 I had an allergic reaction to mosquitos that blew out my eardrum in my left ear, leaving me with more severe continual eardrum and canal issues. Also, my severe environmental and food allergies led to chronic ear fluid affecting my hearing. The medical problems compounded together all contribute to my continual hearing loss.

I was first amplified with a hearing aid in the seventh grade. I feel that I am lucky because my hearing loss has not impacted my life significantly.

I communicate with my voice to everyone in my family and my peers. I do not feel that I have had any challenges due to my hearing loss.

My hearing loss peaked and became a challenge in middle school. The only service I qualified for was a school audiologist, which was provided through The Center for Instruction, Technology and Innovation. The FM system that was provided and my hearing aids really help me to hear as well.

I am academically strong, so it was challenging to get "equal access" initially as my school grades and educational abilities were not affected by my hearing loss. I do have a 504 and I attended all my 504 meetings.

In my younger years., my educational audiologist would have a bin of supplies that I could go to. This bin had everything I needed for my



hearing aid or FM system. As I got older I carried anything I might need during the day with me. Whenever my supplies were getting low my mom could contact the audiologist so they could re-supply my bin with the equipment that was needed. The CiTi staff have always been very prompt in addressing my hearing needs and my equipment needs.

Sometimes in social situations with my peers I cannot hear very well. In these situations I would ask them to speak up and repeat themselves, informing them that I did not hear what was said. I am lucky that my hearing impairment does not impact my social life. I know that others are not as fortunate as myself and appreciate the struggles they may have from adversity with their hearing impairment.

My goals are to go to college where I am going to double major in biology and English. I want to either go into law school to be a disability lawyer or go to medical school to do something within the realm of allergies, specifically food allergies. I am hoping to attend the University of Rochester in the fall.

My family has always made sure that I received annual hearing evaluations, advocated with me at my CSE meetings and listened to what I thought would help me for accommodations or modifications with my hearing loss. As I have become older, my parents have allowed me

to choose the settings in which I need to use my hearing aid instead of me having to wear it on a regular basis.

I am a passionate advocate for those with food allergies. I believe that increased training, education and awareness of food allergies will result in a far lower number of fatalities in children from anaphylactic reactions.

My favorite quote is "A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song" by Maya Angelou.

To others with hearing loss, I'd say recognize when you are having hearing or ear issues and address them sooner rather than later so that further damage to the eardrum does not occur. Advocate your needs so that you can have the services you need to be successful in both the academic setting and social situations. Never assume that there isn't help for you. Inquire at the school level, request an evaluation, involve your primary care doctor in the process and have your family help with the process.

Build your "team" and be part of it. Fortunately, there are many resources and equipment available today that can help bring equal access opportunities for all. My family has always found positive connections, advice and willingness to help from everyone at the Center for Instruction, Technology and Innovation.



*"A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer,  
it sings because it has a song"*



# Mariah Sherman



My name is Mariah Sherman. I am 19 years old and I live in Utica. Utica has many immigrants and different nationalities. Like a lot of places, the area where I live, everyone knows each other.

## **EDUCATION:**

I am a senior at the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD). It is a big, two-story school

with not too many kids. I used to go to public school in Utica at Conkling Elementary School. I was in 6th grade at the time, I had an FM system and a Teacher of the Deaf that would come to my school. I also worked with a speech therapist.

I almost continued on in public school when my speech therapist suggested I wear a device that would speak for me. I would have to type what I wanted to say. The device would be worn around my neck. My mom was not happy about that recommendation, and a few other things, so that is when she found a deaf school in Rome.

Now, I am a student at NYSSD and there is no box around my neck. My favorite subject at NYSSD is physical education (PE) because I have Chiari and Cranial Metaphyseal Dysplasia (CMD), and I can't do a lot of contact sports. In PE I can do half of each sport without it being too rough.

The electives I took during high school were music, art, photography, CPR, transition to adulthood and yearbook. I am a manager on the girls' basketball team and I'm also in Academic Bowl. This is my fourth year. If I could change one thing about my education it would be that there were more students at NYSSD. In school, I use my hearing aids in both of my ears. I also use a sound field system in classes.

I have had many awards and achievements while in school they include: Model Student (2016), Reading (2016), Merit (2016-18), Honor (2016-19), Academic Bowl participant (2017-19) and Close Up participant (2019).

## **HEARING LOSS:**

I have a bilateral severe to profound hearing loss. My hearing loss was

detected when I was born. I was born with Cranial Metaphyseal Dysplasia (CMD), which is probably the reason I have a hearing loss. I failed my hearing test when I was born because of my bone structure. I got my hearing aid when I was one year old and I still use hearing aids today. I don't ever take off my hearing aids because they help me hear.

I feel fine about my hearing loss because I can learn sign language. One thing that I do not like is when my hearing aid battery dies or my hearing aids break because I love to hear.

## **COMMUNICATION:**

In school I sign and am verbal with my teachers and friends. At home I talk with my family and I sign with my two brothers. My brothers also have CMD, and also have hearing loss. With my hearing friends, I talk. With my Deaf or hard of hearing friends, I sign.

## **STRENGTHS/CHALLENGES:**

One of the challenges that I have faced is that I needed to learn American Sign Language. But I overcame that by practicing and learning with my friends. Through this I feel that I can learn another language if I just try and practice.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES:**

When I was in an elementary public school, I had an FM, a teacher of the deaf, and speech therapist. I didn't know sign language at all until I moved to NYSSD. At NYSSD, I have teachers of the deaf who speak and use sign language, speech-language therapy, and an audiologist that works at the school full-time. I use closed captions (CC) for the TV because sometimes I don't understand or hear it.

## **ADVOCACY:**

In public school, I didn't even have equal access because I didn't know what sign language was. Now I have equal access because I know sign language and my teachers use it.

I have to advocate for myself if I run out of batteries by telling my teachers that my batteries have died. Then, I ask my teacher if I can go get batteries from the audiologist or speech therapist. If I don't hear someone when they talk, I ask for them to repeat what they said. I don't go into the community often because I don't like other people to notice I am different.

In situations where people don't sign, I write in a notebook back and forth with them.

## GOALS:

My goal is to go to college and I want to major in teaching. I really want to become a pre-K teacher of the deaf.

## FAMILY:

My family has supported me with my hearing loss. My mom sets up my appointments and helps me get ready for when I leave high school. I communicate with my family through speech, but sometimes they can't understand my speech intelligibility. When people in my family don't understand me, I say it again or write it on paper. I can sign and talk with my younger brothers who are both deaf.

## MORE INFORMATION:

I want people to know that yes, I am deaf, but also I have Cranial Metaphyseal Dysplasia (CMD) and Chiari. I believe a quote that describes me is "If you want to do something, believe that you can do it and conquer it, nothing can get in the way of your dreams."

My role model is my sister because she is in college. She is trying to achieve her goal by pushing through. What she wants for my brothers and I is to see us reach our goals.

## ADVICE:

Just because you have a hearing loss doesn't mean you can't do what a hearing person does.



*"If you want to do something, believe that you can do it and conquer it, nothing can get in the way of your dreams."*





# Michael Laughing

My name is Michael Laughing and I live on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation and Akwesasne in Franklin County. I am 21 years old and in the 12th grade.

## EDUCATION:

For my education I go to the New York State School for the Deaf (NYSSD). I started at 13 or 14 years old. Before coming to NYSSD, I went to a public school close to my home. Currently at NYSSD there are about 50 kids. I really enjoy physical education because I want to be strong and healthy. This year I was a part of yearbook, BOCES, transition to adulthood, music and art. My extracurricular activities include basketball, soccer and softball.

If I could change one thing about my educational setting, it would be that people talk too much and I do not talk a lot. I wish people didn't talk so much.

For my amplification I have a cochlear implant that I use for movies and music but not most of the time. I also wear it at BOCES for safety.

At school I have received awards for basketball, soccer and softball. I've also been on honor roll.

## HEARING LOSS:

I have a bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss.



I was five when I was first amplified, but it was with an old device. I have a cochlear implant now that I have never used consistently. I will put on my cochlear implant when I want to hear movies.

I like my hearing loss, I like it being quiet and calm. When people want to get my attention, they will touch me two times, and then I will look. It is a system that works for me.

## COMMUNICATION:

I communicate with American Sign Language and speechreading. If I want to talk with hearing people or friends, I will just meet with them and chat in whatever way works.

## STRENGTHS/CHALLENGES:

Reading and writing in English are very hard for me and I often want to give up but I have learned how important it is to study.

## SUPPORT SERVICES:

In my BOCES program I have an interpreter/assistant that helps me. At NYSSD we have an audiologist, teachers who use sign language and speech language pathologist who helps me communicate.

Also, computers and phones have closed captioning. Schools have sound field systems for students who use hearing aids and cochlear implants. I do not, however, wear my cochlear implant in school most of the time.

## ADVOCACY:

Sometimes I have a very difficult time in school because all my teachers use ASL and I am still learning ASL, so I do not always understand what is going on. I cannot hear, so when people talk, I do not understand them either. I use a lot of gestures to help me understand what is going on.

When I am in the community, I write to people to communicate. I have to make sure they know I cannot hear. I make sure I tell new teachers or substitutes that I cannot hear and they have to sign to me.

In school I make sure that my eyes are on the teacher. If I am in a group who doesn't use sign language, I am normally quiet.

## GOALS:

After high school I want a job working to earn money. I like carpentry and building things.

## FAMILY:

My parents love me and take care of me, but I like to be alone. They teach me a lot about my culture, and being Native American.

I love my family with all my heart, but we do not use sign language. Sometimes I use sign language and they understand some, mostly I use gestures with them.

## MORE INFORMATION:

I am a crazy man and love Chinese food. I am involved in my Mohawk Native American culture and we do dances and have events together at the longhouse.

"I believe in Native Americans" is a quote that is meaningful to me.

The role models in my life are my parents because they help me when I don't know what I'm doing sometimes.

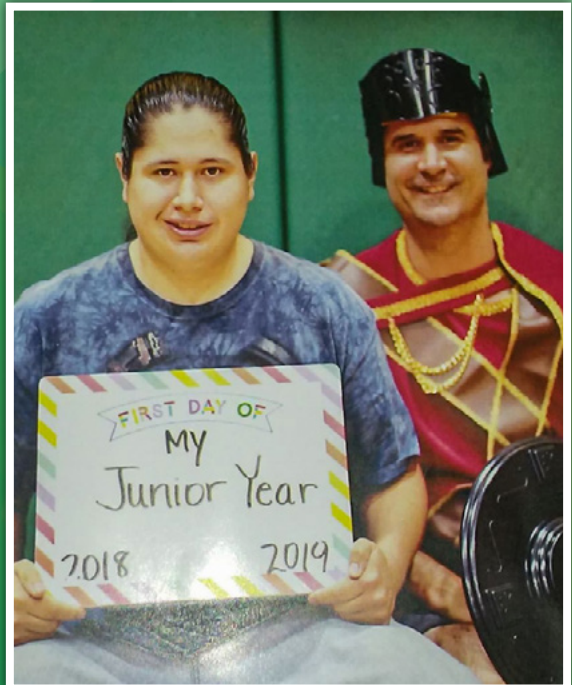
I love my Indian teacher who helps me with basket weaving and making wood lacrosse sticks. Lacrosse is a sport my family really likes.

## ADVICE:

My advice is that families need to learn sign language.



*"I believe in Native Americans"*





# Mike McEwen

My name is Mike McEwen and I'm a senior at Solvay High School. My favorite subjects are English and reading because I love books. In English, algebra, global, history, and biology, I have passed all regents exams. I also participate in extracurricular activities, such as drama club. Last year, I played the part of Frankie Avolon (signing) "Beauty School Dropout" in the musical "Grease." I received a standing ovation. I would like to experience more acting. Then I could audition for a tv show or movie in the future.

I have used cochlear implants (CI) a few times, but I don't use it anymore because it gives me a headache. I am proud to be deaf. When I received a standing ovation in my play last year, I worked hard and did my part well. I felt proud of myself.

When I was born, I was sick, which caused my hearing loss. I couldn't hear anything but I could feel when people would tap my shoulder or stomp on the floor to get my attention. People would also get my attention by flipping on and off the lights, and waving at me from a distance. I don't remember at what age I lost my hearing, but I used a transmitter with the CI.

Now, however, I just have the CI without the transmitter. If my CI batteries run out, I could wait until school is over and charge it at home. I sometimes take it off, because it's very loud. I feel peaceful when I take my CI off. I just like being deaf rather than hearing.

ASL communication works the best for me. My school has an interpreter in all classes. At home, my family uses their voices and they know a little sign language. If my hearing friends want to learn ASL, I can help teach them. I also text or write to communicate with my hearing friends.

The challenges I have faced were auditioning for an all-hearing cast in the musical "Grease." It was hard, but I did not give up. I faced the algebra regents and failed four times, but I finally passed. I learned that I'm a deaf person who is skilled at acting, signing and comedy.

The interpreters have supported me throughout my academic life. Deaf people need to use interpreters to understand what the teacher is saying, otherwise I wouldn't have complete understanding in the classroom. I also use closed captioning on

YouTube, Netflix, my laptop, iPhone, and TV from home because I get to read what is voiced. Without closed captioning, the deaf wouldn't understand.

I believe I have equal access at school. I have life, liberty, equality and security at my school. That is what a good school gives you; liberty and equality, and they also give you lunch because we all need good food to eat to learn and grow.

I'm proud to be deaf. If I can't hear very well with peers, I would either text with iPhone, or write on paper in a social situation. I have some hearing friends, a few of them know some sign language, others not at all.

My goal after high school is to go to Gallaudet University for theater art with the goal to become an actor. When I graduate from college, I will find a job acting, because I feel that is my niche.

My family has been a support to me because they never leave me alone during my struggles. My aunt and my brother, who is 17 years old, know a lot of sign language.

I feel I am able to communicate with my aunt, and I want my mother, brother, sisters, and grandparents to learn more sign language so we can all communicate better as a family.

I like to play video games and watch Netflix. I also like to eat junk food like M&Ms and chocolate cookies. I like reading books and cooking.

My best quality is my personality. I am a comedian, I like to joke around and make people laugh. I believe in positive quotes, "Believe in yourself, you never know what will happen."

Sean Berdy is my role model, because he's deaf just like me, he's a skilled signer and an actor, who got me interested in acting. Another interesting fact about me is that I have no allergies. I have two brothers and two sisters. I am a friendly person. Please don't be afraid to be my friend, if you just ask me, we will be friends. I make my friends feel better because I am a comedian!

My advice is not to give up on your hearing family, teach them sign language, and they will improve their communication. They'll get used to it!



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*"Believe in yourself,  
you never know  
what will happen."*

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## ***HearingLikeMe.com***

HearingLikeMe.com is an online community for people whose lives are affected by hearing loss. We bring together people from all around the world to share stories that inspire hope in almost any hearing loss situation.

We created this site with a simple idea: Sharing our hearing loss stories with each other is a powerful thing. Together, we can learn to live with hearing loss more successfully and advocate in a more meaningful way.

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/>

## ***Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss***

Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss began in 2011 and was created by Karen Anderson, PhD, with the goal of creating an 'umbrella website' for teachers of the deaf/hard of hearing. Karen had many practical materials that were frequently requested and had developed a personal website of these tools. Supporting Success built on the concept of making practical information readily available, resulting in the current resource-packed website.

<https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com>

## ***The Clerc Center***

The Clerc Center is thrilled to announce that the K-12 ASL Content Standards are ready. On the website, you will see Anchor Standards, grade-level standards, the glossary, and more.

<http://www.gallaudet.edu/k-12-asl-content-standards>

## ***CROS system***

The CROS system is designed for single sided deafness. It wirelessly sends the sound from the side where you cannot hear to your better hearing ear.

<https://www.phonak.com/us/en/hearing-aids/phonak-cros-ii.html>

## ***Livescribe 3 Smartpen***

Because the Livescribe 3 Smartpen captures everything you write and hear, you can focus on engaging with your peers and instructors during lectures rather than frantically scribbling notes.

<https://store.livescribe.com>

## ***ACCES-VR***

(Vocational Rehabilitation)

Assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living.

<http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr>

## ***Described and Captioned Media Program***

We're here to educate students with sensory disabilities, along with their parents and teachers. Our major network-produced, educational content is carefully customized to serve the needs of K-12 students, as well as adult students studying to meet the needs of blind and deaf students.

<https://dcmp.org>

## ***NTID- National Technical Institute for the Deaf***

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students at RIT/NTID receive a world-class private university education at a public college price, unparalleled educational support services, dynamic academic programs that reflect the needs of the marketplace, and unmatched support in starting a career.

<https://www.ntid.rit.edu/>

## ***Camp Mark 7***

Camp Mark Seven (CM7) offers an array of recreational, educational, leadership and spiritual programs for deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals of all ages. CM7 offers many waterfront and outdoor/indoor activities such as; swimming, canoeing, arts & crafts, lawn games, basketball and various ball games. There are many nearby trails for enthusiastic hikers. Located on Fourth Lake in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York.

<https://www.campmark7.org/>

# TOD/HH STAYING CONNECTED

