

Parent-to-Parent Support

Meet the family:

Mom: Katherine, hearing

Dad: Keith, hearing

Children: Paige, 5, deaf,
severe/profound loss
Brooke, 2, hearing

Communication Method:
Cued Speech & Voice

Newborn Screening:
None available

Age at Diagnosis: 2 months

Uses hearing aid+cochlear

Dear Parent:

I, too, have a child with a hearing loss. My daughter, Paige, is 5. She has a severe to profound hearing loss. I still remember the process of diagnosing her hearing loss, sorting through communication options, and reaching for support from the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. I hope reading about our journey will help you through yours.

Paige's hearing loss was identified at two months of age. After frequently hearing about "how lucky" I was to have such a sound sleeper, I began to question my "luck." Our pediatrician took our family's concerns seriously and we were referred to an ENT and subsequently an audiologist. Once her hearing loss was identified, I reached out to deaf adults I knew from my workplace, for guidance, support, and perspective. Their message to me was clear and simple: "love your daughter" and the journey will become clearer.

I also reached out to an organization like the Family Support Connection to gather information and connect with families, professionals, and organizations. I searched the web. I toured schools. I read books. My husband slowed down and contemplated. We came to the conclusion that Cued Speech was the communication option for our family. We wanted Paige to have access to our native language, English. Cued Speech allowed us to provide natural English immersion through a visual system. We learned how to cue. We taught our daycare providers and our extended family. It was hard work. It was, at times, overwhelming and frustrating. It was absolutely the right choice for our family.

Paige now has a cochlear implant. She received her implant when she was 15 months old. She still wears a hearing aid in her non-implanted ear. Her hearing has improved from a severe – profound level to a mild/moderate level. Her cochlear implant is a great tool, and it helps her greatly. However, there are still sounds she doesn't hear, times when she can't wear her equipment (i.e. bathing & swimming), and noisy environments can still be a challenge. Cued Speech gives her language access in all environments. Speech therapy, "listening walks," and the constant chatter of her parents have helped her speech and language development.

Paige will be attending her neighborhood kindergarten this fall. She is thrilled. The thought of riding that big yellow bus is exhilarating for her. She loves to read and is currently reading at a second grade level. A Cued Language Transliterator (CLT) will be with her at school, so that she can receive *equal and unambiguous access* to the instruction and language around her. There is so much to "overhear" in our world. The CLT helps her get an equal footing.

Throughout this journey, I have remained true to my personal parenting philosophy: "we are to give our children a strong sense of self." We love them, teach skills, life lessons, and love them a lot more. So as you start your journey, take a deep breath and reach out to others. I've met the most wonderful and amazing people on this path. I've learned more about myself than you can imagine. And, remember that your child is a beautiful and whole person, who just happens to have a hearing loss.

Warm wishes for you and your family,

Katherine
7.05

For information about how to connect with a family like this, please contact the Family Support Connection at 1-866-DHOH-KID, or 651-265-2435 in the Twin Cities. Or, you can email fsc@lifetrackresources.org.