

## In Their Own Words, *Life After Listen and Talk*



**M**y name is Juleh Eide and I am a 12-year-old. I was born with bilateral severe hearing loss. My parents found out that I was hard of hearing when I was one month old. Since my father and paternal Grandparents are deaf, they believed that I should be taught in sign language. A social worker agreed with them and proposed the theory that if a deaf child is forced to talk, the child will develop some sort



of emotional problems later in his or her life. The social worker arranged for a trainer to come to my home every week to teach my parents how to interact with me—using sign language. However, my Mom insisted that I be aided as soon as possible. They searched for financial assistance from many organizations and finally got some help from the Child Hearing League. I obtained my hearing aids when I was five months old. Can you believe that I am still using the same hearing aids that I used when I was five months old?

By the time I was ten months old, my Mom had a strong instinct that she should seek help as soon as possible, so I could be taught to speak. My mother is a special education teacher; from an audiologist she worked with, she learned about Star Leonard-Fleckman, the only Auditory-Verbal therapist in Washington State at that time. Ms. Star trains deaf children how to listen and talk. At first, Ms. Star hesitated to take me in, due to her overloaded schedule. I think during that time she had about 15 children to work with by herself at her home. But my Mom persisted and pleaded, saying, “Please help my daughter! I want her to grow up having opportunities and experiences in her life like other hearing people.”

In January 1996, when I was almost one year old, Star started to give me lessons. She could only see me once a month and taught my parents the special methods to work with me each day at home. Until September 1996, when Ms. Star founded Listen and Talk at Sandpoint, I was able to see her weekly. From then on, my speech,

language, and communication skills blossomed.

I attended childcare when I was two and a half with typical hearing children, then I was enrolled in preschool and kindergarten at a private school. During that time, Ms. Star told my parents that I could graduate from Listen and Talk since my language and communication skills were above the average of regular hearing children. I spent my elementary years in the highly capable program in the Edmonds school district. This year, I was accepted as a 7th grader into Lakeside School. I love books; reading is one of my favorite hobbies. I also like playing the piano and violin (*my new talent!*). Biking with my Dad, swimming, soccer, and spending time with friends are all my favorite leisure activities.

I would honestly say that I am a very lucky person because I never let my disability hamper me to have a life like other normal hearing people. On the other hand, I’m proud that I have a hearing loss because I show that I can overcome many obstacles and can accomplish anything if I am determined. Listen and Talk provided me with tremendous help during my crucial language learning period. My family views Star, my therapist, as our benefactor. She didn’t just teach me how to use my residual hearing and use spoken language, but she also guided me to use my thinking skills. Now I can function as a normal person, and nobody notices that I have a hearing loss, until they see my hearing aids, F.M. system or I tell them! I would just like to thank Listen and Talk for being such a large and helpful part of my life!