



## In Their Own Words, Life after Listen and Talk

by Katharine Grimm

**M**y name is Katharine Grimm. I am 14 years old and in the eighth grade at Our Lady of Fatima School. I have three older brothers: Matt, Robbie, and Jeff. Matt is 25 and just married Lisa which means I finally have a sister! Robbie is 22 and is a senior at Central Washington University where he pitches for their baseball team. My brother, Jeff, is 18 and just left home to attend college at Washington State University. My parents now say that I am their only child. I think I can benefit from this position!

I lost my hearing when I was 9 months old from meningitis. My parents tell me that I was very sick and that they were very worried about me. The doctors told my parents that they would need to learn a new way to communicate with me. At that moment, my mom and dad made the decision that I would learn to talk and would experience life just as my brothers did.

I got my hearing aids on my 1st birthday. My mom says my eyes lit up when I began to hear sounds again! My parents were teaching me sign language and speech. They tell me that when I would learn to say a word, I would drop the sign. This is when I decided that I would learn to talk!

My parents found Listen and Talk when I was three years old. A friend called and told them about a woman they knew who worked with children with hearing loss. My mom called Star that very day. After visiting Listen and Talk and watching Star work, my parents knew that their dream of me learning to talk was going to be a reality!

At Listen and Talk, I worked with Star and attended pre-school. I also attended pre-school in my neighborhood. When I was four years old, my parents gave me a cochlear implant. I continued working with Sandy at Listen and Talk while attending school at Our Lady of Fatima. I graduated from Listen and Talk when I was nine.

I am just like all the other girls in my class. I have my own cell phone and a My Space page. I listen to music on my iPod (my favorite artist is Carrie Underwood!) I babysit children in my neighborhood. I am on my school's volleyball and speech teams. Last year I placed first in my school's speech competition. I love to dance. I have danced since I was two years old. I attend ballet classes every day at Pacific Northwest Ballet. I have performed in Circus Polka, A Midsummer Night's Dream and 6 Nutcrackers! Just the other day, my ballet teacher asked me if I could hear the music. I can definitely hear the music!

I am so glad that my parents found Listen and Talk. Because of all the help I received from Listen and Talk, I was able to attend the same preschool and grade school that my brothers attended. I am able to talk on my cell phone and listen to my iPod. I am able to dance to the music. This spring, I will graduate from 8th grade and I am hoping to continue my family's tradition by attending Seattle Preparatory School next fall.

