

In Their Own Words, Life after Listen and Talk

by Michaela Watts

My name is Michaela Watts. I'm 15 years old. I attend Cascade High School and I'm in the 10th grade. I have a brother named Jonah and he is 12 years old. I was born with a severe to profound hearing loss due to a genetic condition called Mondini (cochlear dysplasia). When I was one year old I received my first hearing aids and my parents enrolled me with Carol Randall who started to teach me how to speak. She also taught my parents how to teach me to speak and hear sounds at home.



Then when I was 2 years old my parents took me to the John Tracy Clinic during the summer to attend the preschool for 3 weeks. After we returned from the John Tracy Clinic my parents started looking for a preschool where they had an oral program. At this time Carol told us that she, along with Star and Suzanne were talking about opening an auditory-verbal pre school. They decided there was enough interest to go ahead and open it even though there were only a few students. Listen and Talk was born. I was in the very first preschool class. I started at age 3 and continued receiving services until the 4th grade.

When I was 5 years old I received a cochlear implant. By this time I was coming to Listen and Talk for after school therapy. Listen and Talk continued to help me with my speech and listening skills and they also worked with my school. I have been in regular public school ever since kindergarten. Because of the work that Listen and Talk did with my school district I have always received the services that I've needed.

When I look back on my life so far I realize that I haven't let my hearing loss stop me from trying new things. I have enjoyed gymnastics, tap dancing, hip hop dancing, guitar lessons, singing lessons, snowmobiling, and now I do horse back riding. I've been riding for four years now in the English style (hunter-jumper) and I love it so much!! I have an iPod touch filled with over hundreds of different kinds of music. I can't really say who or what is my favorite music now



because it changes all the time. Some other things that I like to do are; like hang out with my friends, go to movies every Friday possible, go to football games, and school dances. I'm in the youth group at church and I also like to travel. I was able to travel a lot the last 3 years. When I was younger I went with my Mom to conferences and had some time where I talked with people in the booths about my cochlear implant and how I liked it. I loved doing this; it was fun! Maybe I will do that again sometime. I plan on going to college but I'm still thinking about what I want to study.

When I was at Listen and Talk my teachers Maura, Kim, and Sandy all helped me to learn the things that I needed in order to do well in school. They gave me a great start. I love Listen and Talk and I think that the kids that go there are really lucky to have such great people helping them out.

