

In Their Own Words, Life after Listen and Talk

by Charlie Shafer

Hi, my name is Charlie Shafer. I would like to tell you how my life has been greatly affected by Listen and Talk.

I am now 13 years old, but when I was about one month old, I caught an infection called meningitis. That illness diminished all of my chances of hearing like everyone else.

I wear hearing aids and my loss is considered severe-profound. When I was about a year old, I started going to Listen and Talk to see Maura. Sometimes my mom let me go in my pajamas. Later, I started therapy with Sandy until I was about 10 years old. Everything they taught me gave me the knowledge to succeed out here in a regular school.

About school: I have been at St. Matthew School since Kindergarten. My best subjects are LA/Lit, Math and Social Studies. I love to read and write. Sometimes the stories I write are so scary, that they call me the "Stephen King" of 7th grade. Without the help of Listen and Talk, I wouldn't be able to read as much or be as good of a writer; I am quite sure of this. My mom wants you to know I am on the highest Honor Roll (3.8 GPA).

About extracurricular: I am interested in many things such as cruise ships. It all started with my love of the Titanic when I was about three years old. This year, the 4th Grade teacher invited me to present the historic details about the sinking of the Titanic as well as its discovery by Robert Ballard. My other interests are geography, traveling, playing the flute (Advanced Band), acting, singing, volleyball and soccer. I also like to help other students have a good time at school. So last year I was voted into Student Council; my biggest event was planning and running the school's Inauguration Day activities; it was a success! I also joined Speech Team which helps me to break out of my stage fright. I have also learned how to speak more like a professional than an amateur.

About travel: The John Tracy Clinic program and Alexander Graham Bell Association Conventions had an impact on me, because they gave me the travel bug. I have gotten to see many great parts of the USA and have met many great people from all over the world because my whole family traveled to the John Tracy Clinic for a summer program and to AG Bell Conventions. Both helped my parents learn how to raise a deaf kid in today's world. And for traveling, this summer my family went to Mexico (my first international flight). It was awesome and I was able to speak in Spanish a little bit, mostly saying, "gracias!"

About giving: A few years ago when I was nine years old, I came up with a community service project called *Books & Cookies*. I love books and I think all kids should have good books to read and cookies to eat while reading. I wrap a gently used or brand new book with a bag of chocolate chip cookies like a gift and give it to our St. Vincent dePaul Society. Our St. Vincent de Paul Society delivers *Books & Cookies* along with regular groceries to families who need support. Last month I calculated I have given out over 400 *Books & Cookies* to kids who might not have a chance to have their own good book to read.

About being deaf: Being deaf can be difficult. Sometimes you have to deal with stuff that no one else in your class has to deal with. One story I would like to tell you is when I was in the play HONK! this past year. I was the reporter and had to interview another cast member. The scene was fantastic the first night; I made a lot of people laugh! On the second night, I could tell I had a hearing aid battery dying right when I went onto the stage. I could not hear well enough to know if the mic was on and it made me a bit nervous. I thought to myself, "the show must go on!" Moral of the story: always change your batteries before a performance!

I would like to give some advice:

1. Always use the FM in the classroom
2. Ask the teacher to let you sit in the front part of the classroom.
3. Figure out a way to get all of the assignment info;
it can be hard to hear every detail of each assignment.
4. Have friends over as much as possible.
5. Carry extra batteries with you at all times.
6. Try *everything*.

Thank you for listening to me.

