

In Their Own Words,

Life After Listen and Talk

By Taylor Shell



Don't you ever get tired of people telling you that **you can't**? Growing up as a deaf child, it's a phrase that almost becomes cliché. I've encountered many people every now and then who viewed my disability as a hindrance. Through the past 18 years of my life I have worked hard to show people otherwise, and let me tell you, it has been a ride!!! My mother remembers vividly the moment I was diagnosed with hearing loss—some hotshot intern telling her that her son “would never be able to hear, talk to people, listen to music, play sports, etc...” and quite frankly ... I look forward to tracking him down, and maybe giving a little progress report!!!

Fast-forward 18 years... I am now in my senior year at Lake Stevens High School, taking several rigorous college-level courses, and at the

same time fulfilling my duties as ASB Public Relations Officer. I am in my third year of learning German and one of the most fluent speakers in the class. This past summer, I spent a month traveling around Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic, attending a German school and living with a German family. Later that summer, I also traveled to Honduras on a mission trip. Other than that, I display typical teenager characteristics ... Hanging out with friends all the time, constantly on the phone, listening to my iPod, driving around, coming up with crazy ideas, being weird, sarcastic, etc ...

Unthinkable? Probably. Impossible? Apparently not ...

Of course, I do owe my accomplishments to numerous people who helped me get to where I am today ... The early intervention I received from Star had a huge impact, as well as from the professionals who worked tirelessly to help improve my hearing and speech. My parents have also been hugely supportive, motivating me to succeed and they have faith in overcoming my obstacles. And lastly, I have to thank everyone else who believed that I could overcome deafness.

Granted, I still face numerous struggles in dealing with my hearing loss. Many conversations still include a “Sorry, could you say that again?” I am constantly meeting new people, and it does take time for a deaf

person to adjust to and recognize people's speech. Loud rooms always pose a challenge, with the background noise drowning out other sounds. In spite of it all, I push myself to do better and make the most out of the hearing that I have.

While I've made great progress so far, I do intend on living for a lot longer than 18 years. I have a bright future ahead filled with many opportunities. This fall I will be attending Arizona State University and majoring in Pre-Architectural Studies. Several years down the road, I do hope to be successful in my career and have a great life with a beautiful family (oh, and an Audi wouldn't hurt too...). Yes, hearing loss is a disability, but remember that you cannot spell disability with out **ABILITY!**

