

Makenzie, Devey

12th Grade

Syracuse High School

Utah

What Drive Me

I was born profoundly deaf. My parents were told at the time that it would be necessary for me to learn ASL to be able to develop language and to be able to communicate with them. My mom had taken ASL through high school and college, but even with her ASL experience, she didn't want me to be limited in who I could communicate with throughout my life. My family sacrificed a lot, including selling their home, leaving their jobs, and moving our family several hours away where there were more opportunities for me to be able to receive a better education, receive cochlear implants, and attend a listening and spoken language program for children with hearing loss. I am forever grateful for those opportunities I was afforded as a young child. By the time I turned 5 years old, we were able to move back to our small town and I was able to attend my neighborhood school with very little services required.

What drives me is the desire to take the experiences I have been through and use them to help others. My parents were told that because of my deafness, I would graduate at a 3rd grade reading level...not true. I am taking college English classes right now in 12th grade. My parents were told that if I didn't learn ASL, I would be trapped in a world of loneliness...wrong. I have always had great friends. Some providers told my mom that children grow up and resent their parents if they are implanted young without a choice...not true. If I hadn't been implanted young, the outcomes from my CIs would be very different. The limitations that the world was trying to place on me for simply being a baby who had ears that didn't work is what DRIVES me. One of my goals in life is to help other families who have children born deaf. I want them to know that their child can do anything they set their minds to as long as they have the tools, resources, and support necessary to help them. Whether they communicate through ASL, spoken language or both, whether they live in silence or have cochlear implants or hearing aids, we need to be better advocates for families and children who have disabilities. Rather than focus on limitations or what a child cannot do, we need to focus on their strengths and help them reach their full social, linguistic, and academic potential. I look forward to going to college next year and starting my path to becoming a special education teacher. My experience growing up deaf wasn't always easy, but it gave me a strong sense of compassion and empathy for others facing challenges. This drive I have inside will help me to help others on their path to achieve their goals and to not allow others to place limitations on what they can accomplish throughout their lives!

By Makenzie Devey