Partners in Hearing

A MinneStory

Allison and Greg's daughter, Elise, was diagnosed with hearing loss when she was five years old. Her parents share how ally organizations of the deaf and hard of hearing community worked with their family to secure a hearing aid for Elise.

MINNE STORIES

Allison: I was just thinking about how it felt to have this new baby and how perfect she was when we met her. How beautiful she was to me, and then five minutes after getting into our room, do you remember the doctor saying, or the nurse saying, "I think there's something wrong with her foot," at two o'clock in the morning.

Greg: Yeah, I mean it is our first baby. And we're so overwhelmed already, and it's just I don't know. I'm always kind of like, anything that happens with us, I'm kind of like, well, it could be worse. And then finally we were so happy when they said, "Oh, her foot looks great." We don't have to, "You don't have to use the brace anymore."

Allison: And then we find out that she's got asymmetrical sensorineural hearing loss in her left ear which normally would be caught by the newborn screen.

Greg: And thinking about her having a hearing aid too, and just that, um, I don't know if you want to call it stigma or just that – that thing that sets you apart from your friends and makes you a little different and look different, you know, but I just kind of think about it like, you know, she's – she's gonna deal with it and it's going to make her stronger I think. So then, how did Hands and Voices come about?

Allison: I don't know how they found us. But they found out that we had a child with hearing loss and then we had somebody come over and talk to us about all the different options and what that looked like. I think I was in – I know I was in denial about her getting a hearing aid just because I didn't want her to be different or have any kind of negative experiences. But now I'm really excited. I'm excited for her to have the hearing aid and to be a part of this community of people. I think Hands and Voices is really going to help her. But we were lucky enough to find out that, um, Starkey hearing aids here in the Twin Cities gives out hearing aids to children whose insurance companies don't cover them. So, she's actually on her way to getting a hearing aid which is incredible.

Greg: Yeah, and that was the person from Pacer, right?

Allison: Yeah.

Greg: Who kind of – we copied on all the emails to the insurance companies, and she was kind of, you know, waiting in the wings to see what would happen. And as soon as like, I mean it was minutes after she found out that they're not– that they for sure weren't covered, or that the hearing aids were for sure not covered, she had forwarded our email on to Starkey and set that process in motion.

Allison: I think she's incredible. Like the fact that she was so excited about getting a hearing aid, and wanted to tell her whole class about it, and her teacher, and everyone she meets. She wants to talk to them about her hearing loss in her left ear and, I don't know, I'm pretty amazed by her.

Greg: Yeah, she's not embarrassed by it at all.

Allison: No, it doesn't. I think we as parents put our, what we've experienced throughout our childhood. I try really hard not to put that on her and just make her proud of who she is and not make her fear what other people are going to think or say about her.

Greg: But when you're going through it, it's – there's no pity. It's just, this is our life.

Allison: Yeah.

Greg: This is what we do. This is our normal.

Allison: Yeah.

Greg: So it's – I mean there's no like, 'Ohhh, how are we going to do this? What's going to happen?' It's like, 'No, we have a hearing aid now and that's just – that's it.

Allison: Yeah.

Greg: It's not a big deal. It's not a good thing or a bad thing. It's part of who we are now.

Allison: I sometimes look at her and think, wow. I think how did we create this beautiful person?

Greg: Yeah. I think she's stronger than we are.

Allison: I think so too. And so that makes all the difference in the world.

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