

## Taimane's Story



Taimane

As a young, new mother, I was overwhelmed with joy in welcoming to the world, my beautiful little girl, Taimane. She was perfect! Her father and I adored her from the second we laid our eyes on her. Having carried to full term and not experiencing any complications with my labor, we were excited to leave the hospital and take home our precious little girl. A few hours before leaving the hospital, a woman came in the room to tell me that Taimane did not pass her newborn hearing screening, but that I shouldn't be concerned because this happens all the time and can be caused by having some fluid in her ear. With that assurance, I left the hospital without having too much concern about it. We returned to the hospital 2 weeks later to have the hearing screening performed again, as was recommended. Again, she did not pass. And yet again, the woman who performed the test assured me, that Taimane would be fine but I'll need to follow up with an audiologist. At my daughter's check up with the pediatrician, I mentioned to him that Taimane hadn't passed the newborn hearing screening. Like the woman who gave my daughter her hearing test, he said "I'm 99.9 % sure that your daughter is not deaf." Well, a few weeks later we met with the audiologist who performed an ABR and diagnosed Taimane with severe to profound hearing loss. This diagnosis shattered me as my thoughts of a "perfect" child were no longer real. As a hearing person that did not have much interaction with deaf or hard of hearing people, I had no idea what the future would hold for my daughter. I wanted her to be able to speak and hear her family and her friends. I wanted to know that she would

be able to be in a mainstream classroom with her peers and that she would be able to take advantage of every opportunity that came her way. Living on an island with not a lot of resources, I did a lot of searching on the internet to find ways that I could help my daughter in developing as a typical child would. Fortunately, Taimane was fit with her first pair of hearing aids at the age of 3 months. I still recall the moment her hearing aids were turned on. I was nursing her and when I called her name, she stopped eating.



Taimane

I called her name again and slowly saw her head turn. My heart melted as I knew that she was hearing my voice for the very first time. As she was now able to hear, we could start implementing speech therapy. We were blessed to have an extraordinary Speech Therapist who not only worked so great with Taimane, but who would correspond with me frequently to make sure that I was practicing strategies that were taught that week. We had an amazing early intervention team and because of them, we were able to watch Taimane progress and develop as a typical child. At the age of 3, she went to a mainstream private preschool and did so well. At first, we were nervous as we didn't know if she would be able to communicate effectively or if the other kids would tease or be mean to her because of her hearing aids. Yet, by the end of the first week, many of our fears had subsided as we realized that she was just like the other kids. She played nicely with them, she could speak and hear them, and she loved to be at school. When she went to elementary school, again

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we had fears of the unknown. However, she was doing so well that she was placed in a mainstream classroom and with the assistance of an FM system and preferential seating, she did great and has continued to excel. Today, Taimane is a 10 year old girl that loves sports and plays volleyball, basketball, and softball. She continues to be in a mainstream classroom and has excelled in reading and writing. She plays the cello in her school orchestra. She enjoys being with her friends and family and loves to listen to music on her iPad. Although her diagnosis seemed to shatter my thoughts of her perfection, I was completely wrong. I know that the road will not always be easy for her, but I also know that she has the tools that she needs to not only endure, but thrive on the road ahead. She is perfect in every way!