

## Real Life Stories

### Real Stories. Real Recipients.

#### Reaping The Rewards

How might it be when your son or daughter begins using his or her Advanced Bionics cochlear implant? How might his or her life be changed now that he or she is fully in the hearing world? What experiences await your child after receiving that most precious gift of sound? To learn the answers, let's turn to the parents of children already reaping the rewards of cochlear implant technology, the same rewards that very possibly will await you and your child at this stage of the hearing journey.



#### Life Without Limits

Brothers Parker and Sebastian Shibuya were born deaf. Their older sister Sydney was born with normal hearing, as was their mother Luanna and father Peter. "Parker and Sebastian used to be defined by their inability to hear and by the limitations that went along with that. Now, having the ability to hear, they are defined instead by their personalities," says Luanna, a clinical psychologist in Tucson, Arizona.

"Compassionate and inquisitive, that's Parker. Sebastian, he's the fun-loving kid whose greatest pleasure is making people laugh. Because Parker and Sebastian each have cochlear implants, there no longer is the barrier of silence to stop those special personalities of theirs from shining through." Others see that too, which is one of the reasons why Parker, age seven, and Sebastian, age four, are frequently invited to birthday parties and to visit with friends.

#### An Ear For Music

Speaking of friends, it thrills Northbrook, Illinois, pediatric dietitian Melissa Li and her service manager husband John to count the number of playmates their six-year-old son Brandyn has. They especially delight in the fact that none of those peers see Brandyn as anything less than an equal in virtually every regard, even though he cannot hear a word they speak without his cochlear implant. In addition to his friends, Brandyn romps with his three-year-old twin brothers, Zander and Collin, who both have normal hearing. "As siblings, they all get along great," says Melissa. "When the three of them play hard together, they're very boisterous."

But there's also a serious side to Brandyn, and it's on display every time he sits down to play the piano. "He's so good at piano that after a short time of practice, he can play a song entirely from memory, without reading the notes," Melissa says with awe. "He also likes to compose his own music. Even though he's deaf, I'd have to say that Brandyn has quite an ear for music. I won't be surprised if he grows up to be a professional musician." Brandyn's favorite type of recorded music is classical symphony. He's also partial to outdoor concerts; he attended his first last summer. In whatever form the music is presented, Brandyn requires only his processor to hear and enjoy it.

#### Talking Nonstop

Most people who meet them have no clue that the Kellogg girls—Madison, age seven, and Bella, age five—are deaf. Until, that is, one of them decides to wear her hair pulled back in a ponytail, revealing the cochlear implant's removable headpiece. "We had a construction crew out to the house doing some work a while ago," says their mom, Lisa. "The crew was here for about a month. The whole time, they heard Madison and Bella do nothing but chatter away at each other.

When one of the crew finally noticed the cochlear implant, she asked me about it and thought that I was making it up that the girls have no natural hearing ability."

Madison is in second grade this year at her public school in Saugus, California. "She's at or above her grade level in all academic areas," says Lisa. "She absolutely loves being in school." Bella is the same way. When she graduated preschool earlier this year, she was jumping-up-and-down eager to start kindergarten that very next morning, except that three months of summer vacation stood in the way.

"Bella won't have any problem giving class presentations because she is such a talker," Lisa confidently predicts. "The biggest problem is getting her to stop talking!" Especially when it comes to the phone. Says Lisa, "She and Madison both will talk to Grandma for 20-minute stretches each, and then I'll hear on the other end this exasperated, 'Girls, can I please talk to your mother now?' And then Madison or Bella will keep right on talking to Grandma, asking all kinds of questions just to keep the conversation going. Once they're on that phone, it's almost impossible to get them to hang up."

#### Kids Got The Beat

Something else Madison and Bella are hooked on is the music of Elvis Presley, just like Lisa. "I'm the biggest Elvis fan in the world, so, naturally, my kids can name practically every song he ever recorded," she says. "Not only that, but if I play name-that-tune with them, they can correctly guess an Elvis song after hearing just the first three notes."

The girls have a way to go before they reach their teenage years, but it sometimes frightens Lisa how much like teenagers they already are. "Madison has a stereo system in her room. Bella and Madison go upstairs and shut the door and play their music. Today I went in to tell them something and there's Bella dancing on the table and singing the words to 'Burnin' Love.'" Of course, Bella moving her feet to the sound of music is nothing out of the ordinary. "She's already taken Hawaiian and Tahitian dance classes. And let me tell you, she can dance right to the beat," Lisa laughs.

Lisa and her real-estate investor husband Jeff (who also happens to be a Bionic Ear recipient) take the girls on frequent travel

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adventures by air. To pass the time on those trips, Madison and Bella plug their implant processors into the plane's entertainment system using their Direct Connect and watch the in-flight movies. When they do that, their systems shut out the noise in the cabin, so the only thing they hear is the clean, crisp sound from the video player. They can do the same thing at home with their own DVD player, TVs, radios, MP players, and anything else electronic as long as it has an earphone jack.

### Source Of Pride

By now it should be very obvious that life for children with cochlear implants is a lot like life for most other kids, and in some regards, maybe even better. Still, a few parents not yet decided about cochlear implants worry that their child will be stigmatized by the device. That fear is natural, because the implant's external pieces can attract stares from children meeting the user for the first time.

Luanna, when she notices the gaze of curiosity from other children, gracefully handles the situation by simply explaining to them that Parker and Sebastian need the device to be able to hear. "If you're right up front about it, kids act like this is no big deal and they leave it at that," she says.

Meanwhile, Melissa takes pride in the fact that Brandyn, who is in first grade this year, is the first and only deaf child with a cochlear implant in the entire school district. "Everyone thinks it's marvelous that Brandyn is right at where he should be for his age in terms of his ability to be taught and to express himself," she says. "He is completely mainstreamed; he's not in any kind of special-education program."

### Friends Telling Friends

Parents are often relieved to discover that Advanced Bionics' processors and other externally worn components are engineered to stand up to a fair amount of kid-handling. However, at the Li household, the equipment is treated like precious treasure. "Brandyn is really careful with it because he knows what it does for him, and where he'd be without it," says Melissa. "The only problem we have is that he doesn't want to take it off at night when he goes to sleep. That's how much he loves hearing!"

Melissa reveals, "We recognized what Brandyn would be getting from [Advanced Bionics] is technology that is future-ready. His cochlear implant system can be very easily upgraded as technological improvements are introduced, without him having to go back in for surgery, if he wants to take advantage of those advances."

One more important factor in Melissa's decision was Advanced Bionics' sponsorship of the [Bionic Ear Association](#) (BEA). "We've gained a lot by participating in the BEA," she says. "For one, it is a tremendous source of information about choosing, getting, and living with a cochlear implant. It's also a great organization for meeting people who have their own experiences to share, either as users or as relatives and friends of users."

### Only The Beginning

When things quiet down for the night at the Kelloggs' home, Lisa sometimes lets her mind wander back over the course of her daughters' journey to sound. Even now, she expresses wonder at how far they have traveled to arrive at this happy destination. "When you first discover your child is deaf, you cannot possibly see how they would ever get to this point," she says. But things progress, and in reality, the journey doesn't end there. "The cochlear implant is only the beginning," Lisa acknowledges.

To help your child reach his or her maximum hearing potential, Advanced Bionics is here to support you. Visit our [Support Center](#) at any time during your child's hearing journey. This includes a wide variety of [\(re\)habilitation materials](#), a vast [support network](#), expert [technical help](#), [Audiologist-On-Call](#), the knowledgeable [Insurance Reimbursement Department](#), and of course, the [Bionic Ear Association](#).

*The opinions and experiences expressed in these stories solely reflect those of the recipients interviewed. Results and experiences with the Advanced Bionics HiResolution Bionic Ear System will vary.*

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# Your Child's Hearing with a Cochlear Implant

The time has finally arrived for your child to connect and discover the world of sound with the cochlear implant. Many of you may be wondering, how successful will my child be with the cochlear implant?

Success is defined differently by each of us. For some parents, it may be that their child learns to talk, for others it may be that their child attends school with normal hearing peers, for others it may be that their child hears environmental sounds for safety reasons. While many tests can assess your child's awareness and speech perception abilities, there is no test to measure your personal definition of success for your child. Success therefore needs to be defined with your child's unique background and your personal goals in mind.



When you choose a cochlear implant for your child, you choose to start a life-long journey to hearing. As part of that journey, Advanced Bionics is dedicated to supporting you through our [programs and services](#). We provide tools and education for you and your family as well as the professional community who will support your child on this journey. We are committed to helping children reach their unique hearing potential and maximize success with their cochlear implants.

Your efforts in developing and practicing your child's listening skills are key to maximizing his or her performance. Advanced Bionics brings you several [rehabilitation resources](#) to help you make the most of your child's cochlear implant.

In addition, we encourage you to stay connected with us and other cochlear implant recipients and families by joining the [Bionic Ear Association](#) and visiting [HearingJourney.com](#).

If you have any questions or need additional support on your child's Harmony Journey to Hearing, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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