



Teenager Daniela Porras given new world of sound

Seventeen-year-old Daniela was born profoundly deaf and grew up unable to hear most sounds. But when she received Siemens Hearing aids through Sound Beginnings, a partnership between Siemens and Quota International, she began to connect to the world around her through sound.

Daniela was born with a profound hearing loss, a result of medicine her mother Danitza received when she was pregnant. Danitza was diagnosed with rubella and treated for the disease before she realized she was carrying Daniela.

When Daniela was born, her family decided not to have her tested immediately because she didn't initially exhibit any apparent problems hearing. But when she was 6 or 7 months old, she stopped babbling and did not respond to loud noises such as a dog barking.

At 9 months old, Daniela's parents took her to a physician's office for a hearing test, where they discovered that Daniela had a profound hearing loss, as a result of the rubella medicine Danitza had received.

Daniela's family was living in Costa Rica at the time, where children receive free hearing aids every two years. Daniela got her first hearing aids when she was 1 year old, which gave her the ability to hear some general noise around her, but not specific sounds.

About five years ago, Daniela's father moved the family to the United States to learn English for his work as a minister in the Salvation Army. They lived in Atlanta before the Salvation Army transferred them to Winchester, Virginia, where they now reside.

At a Salvation Army event, Danitza met Lee Perkins, secretary of the Winchester Quota International club, who told her about Quota's Sound Beginnings program. Sound Beginnings is a program that is run by Quota International to provide donated hearing aids from Siemens Hearing Instruments to disadvantaged children.

Although Daniela was already wearing hearing aids, Danitza wanted to see if she would be able to hear better with newer, more advanced models. Danitza submitted Daniela's name for the program and she was accepted and given vouchers for Siemens Cielo[®] 2 hearing aids in July 2009. Once Daniela began wearing the Siemens hearing aids, they opened up a whole undiscovered world of sound. When she began wearing them, she was surprised and happy to hear her mother's cell phone for the first time.

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When the family returned home from the Audiologist's office, they realized that Daniela could also hear the doorbell ringing, honking car horns and the television, sounds she was unable to distinguish with her old hearing aids.

"She was jumping everywhere, screaming," Danitza says. "Every time she hears something new, we hear an explosion of joy."

Daniela is amazed at all the new sounds she hears. Every day is a discovery process, Danitza explains. In addition, Daniela is more independent knowing the she doesn't have to completely rely on others.

"Her self-confidence has increased knowing that she can perceive certain sounds," Danitza says.

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