

A Family's Story about Madeline's Milestones

Julie Fisher, Walk4Hearing program assistant, interviewed Jason Bozzone, father of two-year-old Madeline, who was born with bilateral hearing loss; a sloping loss in her right ear and moderately severe-to-profound hearing loss in her left ear. His family walked in the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing last September.



Jason Bozzone and daughter, Madeline

How did you hear about the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing?

We first heard about the Walk4Hearing through the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), where Madeline's hearing loss was diagnosed. Then, we heard about it again when we enrolled Madeline in the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech. We knew that this was something our family had to participate in, but we had only four to five weeks until Walk day, so we had to get organized fast.

With only four to five weeks to prepare, Madeline's Milestones managed to be the top fundraiser for the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing. What was your fundraising strategy?

Our first step was to establish a presence on Facebook, and we were blown away by the response. Not only did our family and friends contribute to the Walk, but also previous students of mine, former colleagues, and even high school classmates gave to Madeline's Milestones.

In addition, we reached out to our extended family through e-mails and phone calls. We were immediately overwhelmed by all of the support. We were especially grateful to Madeline's great aunt and uncle, Robert and Pat Scavetta, who live in New York. The Scavettas went beyond just donating to the team, which they did generously; they also shared Madeline's story with

who gathered that morning for one reason—hearing loss. Being on that stage, we realized how big of an issue hearing loss is and that we want to contribute to the bigger picture.

During the Walk, we spent a lot of time talking to other families and learning about their experiences. As we walked and talked we felt as if we were becoming part of a bigger family. Additionally, meeting people of all ages with hearing loss gave Melissa and I hope for a bright future for Madeline, one where hearing loss will not hold her back from any of her dreams.

their network of friends and colleagues. All of a sudden checks for \$500 started rolling in from people we did not even know! It was amazing.

What was your Walk day experience like?

We prepared as if we were participating in a pep rally. We organized our team, prepared our Madeline's Milestones team t-shirts, and painted cars with the Walk4Hearing colors of purple and green, and the logo. We wanted to make this day as memorable as possible for Madeline.

Arriving at the Walk, we were pleased to see there were walkers of all ages, as well as activities for all participants, both hearing and those with hearing loss alike! Since we have two other children, Peter and Sophia, it was important that they could participate and feel a part of the experience too.

As the morning wore on, the Walk4Hearing director, Ronnie Adler, took the stage to welcome everyone. We were completely shocked when Ronnie called our names and asked us to come up to the stage for the "Top Fundraiser" award for the Pennsylvania Walk4Hearing. We felt so honored to be standing in front of hundreds of people

If you had a message for parents who discover their child has a hearing loss, what would it be?

I would say that it is natural to feel devastated at first, but then you must move on and realize that the glass is really half full. You just have to see the silver lining. It's important to focus on how you are going to help your son or daughter, and then do everything you can to uncover all the resources available that will aid in his or her development.

Besides your family and friends, what resources have helped Madeline, and your family, adapt to her hearing loss?

The Children's Hospital is the greatest thing that ever happened to us. We are so grateful to the nurses and doctors for detecting Madeline's hearing loss and providing us with support, guidance, and additional resources. We are also very thankful for CHOP's Caterpillar Program which loaned Madeline her first pair of hearing aids.

In addition to CHOP, the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech, the Delaware County Intermediate Unit, and HLAA have all been vital to Madeline's development.

Walk4Hearing Little Van Gogh's



Madeline gets hearing aids.

What changes have you seen in Madeline since first being fitted with hearing aids?

Madeline is an impressive little girl. Since she has had her pink, glittery hearing aids she has become a self-advocate. She speaks up for herself and she lets people know when she can't hear something.

Also, she is becoming more aware of her surroundings. A favorite moment of mine is when Madeline and I went to the Llanerch Diner in Delaware County for our 'Daddy/Daughter' breakfast the day after the Walk. She noticed an elderly man sitting nearby who was wearing hearing aids. She pointed at him, then pointed at her hearing aids and said, 'ears?' The man turned and started talking to Madeline. He took out his hearing aids and showed them to Madeline, and I helped Madeline take hers out to show them to the gentleman. All of a sudden they were in their own little club, one that I wasn't a part of, and I was very proud. 📺

Julie Fisher is the Walk4Hearing program assistant. She can be reached at jfisher@hearingloss.org.



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Jamie Wenger
age 7

Jamie shared the following about the Walk4Hearing. "I liked the Zumba dancing and the balloons! It was a really fun day."

When Jamie was drawing her pictures, halfway through, she said, "Oooh and the rain. I forgot it rained, that was even fun too. And we walked and then had to turn around and come back because the sidewalk was closed."



Shiven Vadalkar
age 5

"I had a fun time. I remember seeing a big blue bird on the Walk."

Shiven enjoyed drawing the bird in his pictures and he mentioned that he remembered everyone's pink shirts!