

“Advocacy: to change ‘what is’ into ‘what should be.’”

—Unknown

Leading a Charmed Life

BY HAYLEIGH SCOTT

My first provisional patents for hearing aid jewelry were granted more than 12 years ago, and HLAA was among the first to support a little girl's dreams to help others feel proud of their hearing devices.

I was diagnosed at 18 months of age with severe-to-profound hearing loss, and I've been wearing bilateral hearing aids ever since. My parents were surprised at the amount of attention my hearing aids and clips drew, and it was important to them to have people see their child first—not her hearing loss—so my parents grew my hair long to hide my hearing aids. I know they meant well, but from a young age, I wanted my hearing aids to shine.

I Discovered I Had a Thing For Bling

Eventually, on a trip to visit my grandparents, I sat at the kitchen table and began sketching ideas that I had been imagining. I wanted to celebrate the tool that helped me function as part of the hearing world and show that I was proud of my hearing aids. Fortunately, my family was fully supportive! After I applied for my first provisional patents, my parents helped me buy supplies, and I began producing charms and tube twists. My audiologist offered to share a display of my items, and I was in business.

Bringing Hearing Aids Out of the Shadows

My company, hayleighscherishedcharms.com, was born a few months later and grew quickly! Unbeknownst to me, my audiologist submitted my name to the Oticon Focus on People Awards. What a surprise it was to win in the student category! Oticon flew my mom and me to Washington state, where I received the award and gave the first of many speeches.

The word spread quickly about this new way to help people remove the stigma of wearing hearing devices, and people—young and old alike—were suddenly jumping on board in their eagerness to stop concealing and camouflaging their equipment. My customer photos and testimonials are my favorite pages on my website. I also



Hayleigh, far left, with her mom and sisters, at their booth in the exhibit hall at the HLAA Convention in 2011.



Hayleigh graduated from college in May 2021 with a double major.

have an album filled with emails from customers in which they have shared their struggles and revealed how my story or products have encouraged them. This is the biggest reward: to know that your dream could play a small part in helping someone else's life become brighter.

Setbacks and Successes Can Help Others

I have been working hard these last few years on becoming brighter myself, so that I can encourage younger generations. In early May 2021, I graduated from college with a double major: elementary education K-5 degree with a dual ESL pre-K-12 and Gifted Education Endorsement plus a Bible and Theology degree. Several of my past interviews (TFK and Wonder Books) have resulted in articles being printed in materials that are being used to educate students in mainstream classrooms. As a result of being featured in one of these publications, I traveled to Massachusetts two years ago to meet with all of the fourth graders at one school. It was such a pleasure to teach them what it is like to have hearing loss and explain the joy I derive from helping people not only accept their hearing aids but also enjoy them.

I am hoping that by sharing my story and hearing loss journey with the hearing, Deaf and communities of people with hearing loss, I can help dispel the stigma associated with hearing loss and promote boldness in people with hearing loss. Be unashamed! **HL**

From a simple drawing at a kitchen table to patent applications and multiple storefronts stateside and internationally, Hayleigh Scott has shared her hearing loss and life journey to inspire others to not only show their hearing devices but also to celebrate them.