

Walk4Hearing Heroes Help HLAA Bring Hope

The HLAA Walk4Hearing is held in 20 cities across the country, raising awareness and bringing hope to people with hearing loss. Since 2006, more than 300 Walks have raised \$19.2 million for national and local programs, welcomed 110,000 participants and shown countless people with hearing loss that they are not alone. Here we're spotlighting three heroic teams whose long-term participation has helped HLAA bring hope to millions.



**"I love to see little kids
walk with a big smile."**

— Adeline Yankoski

\$36K in Ten Years: Team Adeline

Positive Steps with Friends and Family

For the past ten years, Adeline Yankoski's parents have gathered her friends and family members to form Team Adeline for the New Jersey Walk4Hearing. The team walks to help educate people about hearing loss, while supporting and empowering those who are just like she is. Team Adeline's mission includes helping 11-year-old Adeline remember that she can do anything she wants to do, with her power-pink hearing aids.

Team Adeline, one of the longest-running teams, has participated in Walk4Hearing events since 2014. The team is also a top fundraiser, generating \$36,000 over ten years.

When the annual Walk4Hearing went virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic, Adeline's family decided to organize their own walk at the beach. Team Adeline's members range in age from two to 80-plus, and the team now does two walks each year. One is organized the day before, and the other is held on the Walk's official date in Mercer County Park, New Jersey.



Rockin' My Hot Pink Hearing Aids!

I like to dance, play soccer and surf—I just bought my surfboard this summer after saving up for two years. I wear hot pink hearing aids and rock them!

We have walked more than 90,000 steps over the past nine years with Walk4Hearing! We get to see, meet, walk with and help kids just like me. I love walking with my friends and family. Last year, we had more than 30 people on Team Adeline, including my two best friends. My message to kids like me is, "Keep being yourself and hang loose!"

I always love to hear kids ask me, "What are those things in your ears?" I say the same thing every time: "They help me hear better." I've had a lot of practice. I always get uncomfortable when kids stare at me, but when they do, I just smile, wave and tell myself, "It's OK. Everyone is different." — Adeline Yankoski

Walk4Hearing has played many roles in Brody's life, but most importantly, it has taught him the importance of being an advocate.

\$10K in Six Years: Brody's Monsters

An Early Start with Walk4Hearing

Brody Fromholt was born in 2012 with a profound hearing loss caused by Usher syndrome, a rare genetic condition that affects both hearing and vision. It was identified during his newborn hearing screening and confirmed during an auditory brainstem response (ABR) test. Brody received his first pair of hearing aids at just three weeks old.

By a quirk of fate, both Brody's mother, Katie, and grandmother had been longtime teachers of children with hearing loss. His grandmother retired to care for Brody as a baby and Katie eventually changed jobs to work at the Kentucky School for the Deaf, which he attended.

Thus, upon his diagnosis, Brody's parents were already aware of various options. They immediately went into research mode and decided upon cochlear implants (CIs). Their search for the best surgeon to perform the procedure led them to Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center (CCH). CCH sent information and resources, including an introduction to the local Walk4Hearing the following spring.

A Family Affair from the Get-Go

In May 2013, Brody's family participated in the Dayton Walk4Hearing, where extended family members joined the newly organized Brody's Monsters team. Together, they proudly raised a few hundred dollars that first year and were delighted to connect with other Walk4Hearing participants in that area. Being at the Walk gave Brody's family the opportunity to be around other people with hearing loss. Since 2013, the Brody's Monsters team has raised more than \$10,000.

Through Walk4Hearing, Brody's family has networked and shared helpful resources with other nearby hearing professionals. Ten years after its first Walk, the family now participates in the Kentucky Walk4Hearing closer to home, where Katie served for two years as the Walk Chair.



Stopping Hearing Loss in Its Tracks

Brody has never let hearing loss slow him down and excels in his middle school gifted and talented program. He also plays trombone in the school band, manages the football team and produces his own videos.

Advocacy is especially important to Brody. He corresponded with Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear regarding Usher syndrome, which led to an appearance with the governor as he signed the Usher Syndrome Awareness Day Proclamation in 2021. Brody is always happy to talk about his hearing loss and share the strategies that work best for him.

"I was finally at peace when I participated in my first Walk4Hearing. So many others shared the same disability, and for once, I felt accepted."

- Courtney Muchow



\$9K in Nine Years: Courtney's Crew

Courtney's Crew has participated in the NYC Walk4Hearing for more than nine years, raising more than \$9,000. Courtney was born with atresia and microtia, two malformations of the ear that can cause hearing loss.

A Step in the Right Direction

Courtney has faced many challenges academically and socially, but she has never let her differences define her or hold her back. Courtney and her parents encountered numerous roadblocks getting accommodations, including institutional support for her FM system. The system, which is a hearing assistive technology that pairs a microphone with a receiver, was necessary to help Courtney process sound.

While in middle school, Courtney decided to abandon her FM device altogether and learn to navigate the challenges of hearing loss on her own. She was determined to surpass her school administrators' expectations, despite the roadblocks she experienced. She also became interested in finding ways to help others with hearing loss and stumbled across the NYC Walk4Hearing. She's never looked back, citing the new sense of community it gave her as a comfort and inspiration.

Marching to the Beat of Her Own Drum

Courtney's classmates often didn't understand how exhausting a unilateral hearing loss can be, and they were sometimes confused by her quiet demeanor. Bolstered by a newfound sense of confidence that began with her participation in Walk4Hearing, she decided to shake off any sense of stigma and talk openly about her hearing loss with her classmates. She made a commitment to being her authentic self, even going so far as to pull her hair back, rather than using it to hide her ears. Courtney not only acknowledged her hearing loss but also became comfortable enough to joke about it with friends. Her courage, authenticity and unwavering focus on academic achievement were richly rewarded when she was named class valedictorian at her eighth grade awards ceremony!



Forging Her Own Path

After graduating from high school third in her class of more than 600 students, Courtney received several academic scholarships and was accepted by the University of San Francisco, where she studies psychology, neuroscience and gerontology. She also serves as the director of operations of the Future Clinicians Association, works in the Aging and Diversity Research Lab and is launching an intergenerational knitting club.

Although miles from where she started, Courtney plans to continue participating in Walk4Hearing events to give back to the organization that helped her on her path of personal growth. Her friends and family members pledge to be with her every step of the way. Courtney promises, "I will continue to be the Fruit Loop in a world of Cheerios. I will be a leader, an educator and always advocate for people in need."

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Walk4Hearing
and how you can
get involved:**

