

## Doing Deaf Differently: Who - What - Why?

**Today is a new day for children with hearing loss. Even profoundly deaf children can learn to listen, talk, and thrive alongside their hearing friends and family.**

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On Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, more than 550 people from every corner of Indiana attended Hear Indiana's 6<sup>th</sup> Annual **Talk Walk Run** presented by Peyton Manning Children's Hospital at St. Vincent. The fundraiser raised a record \$45,000 to support hard of hearing and deaf children who listen and speak, their families, and the professionals who support them. Lt. Governor Becky Skillman summarized the importance of this fundraiser, "Hear Indiana guides parents who are fearful their child will never hear or speak to the reality that they can do both. Thanks to the work of Hear Indiana, these children can reach their fullest potential as independent members of society."

During the Awards Ceremony, Ralph Taylor, who represented the Mayor's Office of Disabilities, also spoke of inclusion: "We promote the inclusion of all individuals with disabilities in our community and in the workplace. Let's continue to work together to make our city an even finer place to live for everyone, where inclusion is not just viewed as the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do." Mr. Taylor then read a proclamation signed by Gregory Ballard, Mayor of Indianapolis: "Whereas, hearing loss is the most common birth defect..., most parents are not aware of the options for addressing it. Children with hearing loss can learn to listen, talk, and thrive alongside their hearing peers. I... hereby proclaim May to be *Better Hearing and Speech Month* in the City of Indianapolis, and I ask all citizens to join me in this observation."

Master of Ceremonies, State Representative Brian Bosma, also explained why he continues to support early identification of hearing loss and early intervention: "Our own son was born with a profound vision impairment. He had some miraculous surgeries, and today is a very productive young man. Thanks to early intervention, the course of these children's lives has been dramatically changed forever. I'm thrilled to be part of the Hear Indiana's **Talk Walk Run** to celebrate *Doing Deaf Differently*."



One young runner stood out in the crowd. Two-year old Elliott Patton was sporting a blue mohawk, two blue cochlear implants, and a T-shirt that read, "My cochlear implants rock!" A cochlear implant is a surgically implanted device that sends sound information directly to the brain. The Pattons raised more than \$1300 for Hear Indiana's programs, and drove three hours from Demotte, IN to participate in the **Talk Walk Run**. When asked why they got involved with Hear Indiana, Elliott's mother said, "We were the lucky ones. Elliott's profound hearing loss was diagnosed at birth. We had great doctors who advocated that Elliott get his implants as early as possible. Not all parents are lucky enough to receive this kind of support." Elliott received his first cochlear implant at six months of age. Thanks to early intervention, Elliott is a typical two-year-old boy who listens, talks, and dances! Naomi Horton, Executive

Director of Hear Indiana added, "It is truly a day to celebrate! Today's parents of hard of hearing and deaf

children are embracing technology, and Elliott's parents are proud of their son and the choice they made for him: to listen and speak. Elliott is *Doing Deaf Differently!*"

Approximately 95% of children with hearing loss are born to hearing parents. With today's technology and appropriate early intervention, more families are choosing to communicate through listening and spoken language. Families simply want their children to be part of the hearing world. Thanks to advances in medicine, hearing aids, and cochlear implants, that dream can come true. For over 30 years Hear Indiana has advocated independence through listening and talking. Hear Indiana is the non-profit Indiana chapter of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AGBell.org). For more information please visit [HearIndiana.org](http://HearIndiana.org) or call 317-828-0211.