

My Angel Maddie

Hi, I'm Kim Schafer from Spokane! I was born in Omaha, Nebraska. Since my Dad was in the Air Force, I lived in NE, Tucson, MI, and then moved here when I was 11. I graduated from Medical Lake, a great country school where I still have 8 awesome BFF's (Best Friends Forever). We get together as often as we can to celebrate b-days and now do a yearly weekend trip to make new memories. I have been married to Mark (a local Spokane boy) for 23 years (on Aug 22nd), have 3 beautiful daughters, Amanda almost 20, Cassie 18, and my angel Maddie. I was blessed to spend the first 9 years after starting a family home w/ my girls – loved every minute of it. Madisen contracted bacterial meningitis at 10 weeks old and became profoundly deaf. No cognitive or physical disabilities. We connected with the Deaf Center and began sign classes when she was 4 months old, hearing aids at 7 mos old (thankfully the process of getting aids is quicker now!) and became very involved in our local community with our Parent support group, as well as deaf community activities.

With no success with her hearing aids, but a wealth of sign vocabulary at 2 ½ years old, we saw growing frustration for Maddie in communicating with others in everyday life. Once I met a couple other families whose children had received a cochlear implant, I was comfortable with the surgery part of the process. Maddie was implanted just before her 3rd birthday and upon activation, her listening and spoken language skills took off. It was so heartwarming to see her smoothly fit in with the hearing and deaf community, all with an ear-to-ear grin on her face.

Maddie was a ray of sunshine to everyone she met. She was at the height of her life in 4th grade/ 9 ½ yrs old, a studdette on the soccer field, just learning to play volleyball, spoken language first with sign in her back pocket for clarification needs, and loving life when she was struck down by seizures. She spent 12 wks in a drug-induced coma, 4 ½ mos in ICU, 1 mo rehab facility before coming home to us in a wheelchair, cognitively impaired, 6 mos after the cycle of seizures began. They had taken the cochlear implant out to get a better view of where the seizures were coming from, so she was back to being deaf. Within 6 months of her coming home, we had her reimplanted, but she never got the benefit she had, probably damage from the seizures. Thankfully, we had sign to help communicate with her. Our darling fought to stay with us for 2 more years until a seizure took her to heaven on July 23, 2007. She is our angel looking down on our family and inspiring all of us to reach out to help others by sharing

Maddie's great story of hearing loss and the wonderful possibilities that are available. Love and be proud of who you are most of all!

I worked for Advanced Bionics in a Parent Support position until Maddie became sick. I then took a school lunch lady job – loved being with the kids and have always loved cooking! I then was offered a position working at Spokane ENT Clinic in Vestibular Testing and Patient Advocacy until April of this year when layoffs occurred. I have worked for HOPE School here in Spokane since 2008, part time as their Community Outreach Coordinator, sharing w/ the community about hearing loss, the benefits of early intervention and what advantages HOPE School can provide a deaf or hard of hearing child. I am also the Board Liaison for HOPE School. I head up the FISH (Families In Support of Hearing) support group, which meets every other month and sit on the board of Hands & Voices. Oh, and I will be a grandma in Oct! As you can see from the pics, our family has a lot of fun! Busy, wonderful life!

