>> The 2:00 session is officially cancelled. And so we hope to see you back in 20 minutes for the next session at 2:30. It will be a good one! Please come back.

[ Break ]

>> Thank you all for being here and welcome to Amanda Linscheid.

We are starting a couple minutes late, and there isn't another session in here until 3:15, so we're going to grant a little bit of grace and go over a couple minutes, but not much more than that, but before you leave this session, please make sure you go to the app and fill out the evaluation for this session. So I'm done. I don't have to say anything at the end. So we'll let you go right up until 3:02.

>> AMANDA: 3:02, that's very precise. As she said, I'm Amanda Linscheid, and this is my daughter, Evie, and she's going to help me and you're going to hear a little bit from her as well. We're going to present our journey, and our sort of philosophy was finding the joy in the journey. It's not always easy, but we're going to kind of say a few things we did that helped us to do that.

So this is us. We are a farm family in very rural Wisconsin. We come from... (chuckling)

Yay, Wisconsin!

A little town called Cobb. There's 458 people in our town. So when Evie came in 2010, she shook our world, as all babies do, but she came with some extra special, right?

She did not pass her newborn screening. And later I found out they tried six times to make that happen for her. What they don't know is how grateful I am that that didn't work out for them. It definitely worked out for that we just had that information so early, right?

This is our big machinery in the background. And so when we started our -- so we made the decision to go a direction of cochlear implants. And when we started that, our goals were that she could hear our big machinery. It was simple, right? We dived into sign language. We found all the best schools. And I did all the research. But we have a farm. We can't pick up and move that. So we looked at me going with her during the week and then coming home on the weekends. So it limited us and yet it focused us. So it was like the first example of sort of finding joy in the journey, right? We knew there were certain things we couldn't do. We were going to make whatever we needed to happen happen. But it definitely pushed us in a direction.

So, like I said, our little tour guide, you're going to see a lot of pictures, not a lot of content on my slides, but...

So Evie is my greatest teacher, right? As all my kids are, different things, but she has taught me and the world a lot already, and we are just getting started.

So another sort of philosophy of our family before we ever got Evie, my oldest daughter, just 14 months older than Evie, Lily, and at our wedding -- we're farmers, so we know a lot about weeds. This is my bouquet from my wedding. If you notice, there's a thistle right in the middle. I always thought thistles were beautiful, but there's also wheat in my bouquet there somewhere. So we started to have this family strategy of "More Wheat Than Weeds." So finding the bounty in life. That fit really well with this journey we were just about to go on, so...

So I'm going to focus on three different topics, if you will. We're going to talk about how our family went the distance, and in a myriad of ways. And also about Evie's little ears and us learning about Evie's little ears. And then Hear Peers. We'll talk about how those three things solidified our joy in our journey and how all of those were definitely part of our bounty.

So, "going the distance."

So this is Wisconsin, if you don't know. Some of you know it very well. This big arrow that says "home," that's where we live now. We live almost to Iowa. The big far arrow is where our CI center was, as well as where our therapists were. Right?

The little arrow at the bottom is where I grew up. So some sort of triangle there. But when we started making this journey, we were going to our CI Center, about three hours away, one way. Sometimes biweekly, definitely weekly, for quite some time.

So, yeah, that could be a weed, right? That could be a weed. However, we found an amazing team in Milwaukee that supported us every step of the way. And we got really good at riding in cars with family. We could do road trips like you would not believe. We spent a lot of time talking. My husband and I accredit this journey with our marriage. We talked a lot about everything. We were going through a lot. We needed a lot of time to talk, right?

So this could definitely be a weed, but we kind of made it our wheat. It solidified our foundation.

Then you have all these crazy people here. So this is our first Walk 4 Hearing. How many have done a Walk 4 Hearing. They're just this moving event. 40 people on our team for our first year. And not one of them had a clue what we were going through, but they wanted the distance for us. They met us where we were. And they would do anything for us.

So really that is part of our journey as far as going the distance, because so many people did it for us.

The next thing is the little ears. Our story is pretty similar from what I'm picking up, so Evie did not pass her newborn screening. She had hearing aids by two months old, the youngest ever in Wisconsin for the Wishes program. Pretty excited about that. They did absolutely nothing. But, hey... except maybe drive me nuts.

She was implanted just a little before her first birthday. She's got her mean mug on, but honestly she did not skip a beat. I was far more tired than she was. And then we sort of started this journey of learning what this looks like. Kind of like brand-new little ears, right?

So by some chance I came across this book. And I don't honestly know who put it in my hands. Whoever it is, I'm super grateful for them. They're a bit of an angel. It was a Little Ears diary and it was literally broke down by weeks. What we found at this step, when we had those little brand-new ears is we were expecting things to happen so fastly. And they didn't always. Right?

There were times when I didn't know if we were making progress. And so when you turn the page here, Ev...

When you can look back and realize she said "bye-bye" for the first time, when we were getting nothing from her before, and exactly when that happened -- and any CI moms in the room here? The coil, putting it back on 50 million times day, the day she did that first time was... oh, my gosh! We're doing something! Something is happening here!

So the power of this journal that someone just happened upon giving me was that I could look back. I could see I'm making progress, we're making progress, things are happening here. And then all of a sudden it explodes and you realize how much progress you're making. But there are some times there where you are unsure.

What this did was it gave us something to reflect and keep track of how we were making that progress.

So we were seeing, you know, little bits of bounty throughout, but we needed to sometimes stop and reflect that that is what we were seeing. So I just... you know, whenever we are doing this journey, or any big journey, just say, write down milestones, review them, and then celebrate everything, right?

I remember the first time she said "I love you" back to us when she didn't have her implants on at night, and I know I didn't sleep the whole night, because I sat and I bawled. That's all it took.

So, just really celebrating those little milestones and how much those end up to be huge ones.

So then Hear Peers. I teach a class, and it's over right now.

So Hear Peers... go ahead.

So this top corner is my high school friends, right? My ride-or-dies. And this is my sisters. And I couldn't call a single one of them and ask what to do with my baby that was deaf. Right? They love me fiercely, and I love them fiercely, but I didn't have anybody.

So what I needed to do was find some. So the next picture you will see a whole bunch of little girls. How I found these moms was I talked to everyone in the waiting room at Children's Hospital. Every single one of them. And if they knew somebody, we added them too, right? So this is the one and only time these children ever got together. But their moms supported each other fiercely.

At any point I wanted to send a message to them, they would have something to say like that. What I realized was I needed Hear Peerers. Moms of those. And then I had a crazy bunch of people that fell into my lap. And an adult cochlear implant user, another mom, and a crazy engagement lady that just never seemed to leave me alone. But you start building these -- you build a new community, right? You build your Hear Peers. These were all an integral part of my success of making it, and Evy's success of getting all of this knowledge all the way down to her.

And then what we found was Evy needed to build her Hear Peer community too. So we've got a bunch of little kids there. Some of them are implant users. Some are hard of hearing. Some of them are siblings. And you can't see this picture down here very well, but we would go to meetings, and she would be the youngest person there by 65 years, right? But she sat and she learned, and they were so engaged with her. And so many times -- actually, just recently, people have said, well, if Evy can wear her implants and have no big deal, we can get hearing aids. We have been struggling with this for a long time. Why is this a big deal? It's not for Evy.

So it was amazing how she put herself in situations that probably would be not comfortable for another -- I think she was 7 or 8 there, and she just rolled with it. She learned. She gave a lot of perspective sometimes. She's taught a lot of people how to switch their microphone cover.

And then our professionals... so when we went to mainstream Evy in school, she was the first child with hearing loss in 26 years in the school district. However, we had all these wonderful people that came in my path. So this one to the left is our birth-to-three, which is Wisconsin's EHDI. DHH teacher. She had never worked with a kid with cochlear implants. She admittedly said, I don't have any idea what I'm doing, ookay? But she made the trip to Milwaukee with us, spent the whole day in the car with us to learn. She met us at a campsite, because we were out camping, and she didn't want us to have to come home for therapy. These amazing people that fell in our line and made this possible, right?

These are our wheat. And then by some crazy chance, her 4K teachers, daughter also had hearing loss. Not the same school district. Really we didn't have awareness of it until we were in the class. And so now Ms. Sanders became a huge champion of Lily, and -- of Evy, excuse me, and us of her daughter too. Her daughter did a senior project on hearing loss and asked Evy to speak. So it's so amazing how, again, you create that -- your Hear Peers, your circle of people.

So, you know, find them and make them part of or your family, right? Make them part of your tribe or whatever you want to call that. So this is such a cool picture. And you know, it's girls ice skating, but this is Evy's friend Kylie and Kylie asked Evy to go ice skating. You're like, ice skating... right? That means a helmet. Helmets are like...

You've got to wear a helmet. She's like, really? Yeah, really.

So Evy showed up at ice skating and Kylie had a helmet too. Right?

Those are your people. So they've been ice skating again. They both wear helmets regularly. They don't think twice about it anymore. But just finding those people in your path and keeping them as tight as you possibly can.

So, all we ever wanted for Evy was for her to grow and thrive. And in our system, right? In our crazy mess of a farm and our little bit very amazing school district, but slightly removed from everything else in the world, that is what our hope was for her.

And I'm going to let her tell you if that worked out.

>> EEVY: Hi, my name is Evy, and I'm 12 years old, and here are some of my favorite things I love to do.

I play a lot of sports. I play softball, basketball, and volleyball. My favorite is definitely volleyball. I just recently joined a club team and I've been having a blast with my brand-new teammates, and we've been doing really good.

I also am a part of 4H. I show cattle, horses and pigs, and every year I get to show at my county fair. And once again, it's a lot, a lot of fun.

I also participate in speaking contests. This picture is with me and my friend. We had gotten reserve champion on our presentation about horses. I also enjoy fishing with my family. We have some pretty funny fishing stories. So always great. And any camps I can get myself into. I've been to horse camp, church camp, lions camp, basically any camp, you can name it and I've been there.

I also love sharing. I'm in band and choir. I always participate in any musicals I can get myself into. And I love sharing my story with other people like you guys.

This picture actually has a story to it. So, as you can see, I don't have my coils on because I always hated how loud the fire trucks were. It was such a pain to listen to them. So I just decided I would watch the parades, I would see all the fire trucks, except I wouldn't have to listen to them. And ever since that day, even now I still take off my coils to watch the fire trucks.

Thank you guys so much for being here and sharing your time and listening to our story.

>> Any questions, we're happy to answer them. I just want to say thank you to all of you for being in this room, not just for listening to us, but to be at this conference... oh, Judy.

If you want to talk to Evy, it will be... Evy said last night to me, so, Mom, am I your sidekick or are you mine? I'm absolutely your sidekick.

I'm the Robin and you are the batman.

So they just asked if anybody would like to talk with Evy. She'll be at the MED-EL booth after the presentation here today.

[ speaker away from the microphone ]

>> So we have a question from the audience on which animal Evy prefers. That's a tricky one.

>> EVY: I honestly couldn't tell you which is my favorite. I would probably say, in the show ring, pigs is the most competitive, and personally I like competition, so I would say showing pigs is the best.

Any other questions?

Okay, once again, thank you!