



Kelly Cashion, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Hi! My name is Kelly Cashion and I am very excited about my new role as a Parent Guide for Georgia Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Program. My main job for the last 15 years has been mom of three wonderful kids. I have a 15 year old daughter, a 13 year old son, and a 6 year old son. My husband and I moved from North Carolina to Newnan, Georgia 11 years ago.

My 13 year old, Caleb, was diagnosed with hearing loss at age 4. Although we love the community we live in, I felt at a loss trying to connect with other parents of hard of hearing/deaf children. I have worked in the counseling field for many years, so I understand the importance of support and empathy. It wasn't until a couple years after Caleb's diagnosis that I came across Georgia Hands & Voices and finally found what I had been searching for. Georgia Hands & Voices has been a support community for me. Having other parents who can relate to challenges of having a hard of hearing child, answer questions or give feedback based on their experience has been invaluable. Now I get to be a part of that outreach to other parents!



Scarlett Giles, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Director

My name is Scarlett Giles and I live in the North Atlanta suburb city of Woodstock, Georgia. I grew up in Augusta, Georgia, home of The Masters. My calling has always been to work with kids. I was a former high school science teacher until I had my babies and became a Stay-At-Home mommy. My husband, Peter, is an educator in Cobb County and grew up in Marietta, Georgia. We have three children, Colin (11), Kendall (9), & Amelia (7). We also have three dogs to add to the madness: Jasper (15), Hairy (2), & Blue (2). While two of our children carry the Connexin 26 gene for hearing loss, their journeys have been different. Colin has high frequency, bilateral, sensorineural hearing loss and was identified later so missed early intervention. Amelia has mod-severe, bilateral, sensorineural hearing loss identified at birth and went through the early intervention system. She is the proud owner of blue hearing aids & rainbow molds. She

attended the Atlanta Speech where I bonded with other families that had children with hearing loss and/or other special needs. Once Amelia mainstreamed into her local public school, I realized that Amelia had built a strong confidence from being around other kids that were deaf/HH like her at Speech School. I had also been comforted and empowered by meeting a group of warrior moms at the school. When I was approached about becoming a Parent Guide for Georgia H & V GBYS program, I realized how blessed I had been to meet other moms on the journey, and I was saddened by how so many moms were out there alone on the hearing loss path. I knew it was my time to help encourage, empower, & connect other parents in the Deaf/HH world. Finally, I must add that the most important word in my vocabulary now, after years of walking this journey, is PERSPECTIVE. Perspective will sometimes break you and sometimes build you up, but it will empower you with empathy and make you a powerful advocate for your children.



Lupita Huerta-Rodriguez, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Diversity Parent Guide

Lupita is married to Josh Rodriguez, a big fan of the Chicago Bulls and Chicago Cubs!! She also has two children, Isabella 15 years old and Alan a rumbustious 7-year-old. Her daughter Isabella was born with left Microtia and bilateral Aural Atresia which resulted in a moderate to severe conductive hearing loss. Isabella has been wearing a bone conduction hearing aid since the age of 4 months and throughout the years Isabella has under gone several surgeries to make an ear canal and to make a more typical looking left ear. Isabella is a former GA PINES child, and is currently a sophomore in high school and enjoys playing sports and is eager to learn American Sign Language.

Lupita is a native of Mexico City, Mexico and has a bachelor's degree in Marketing with a Post-graduate in Quality Control from a private University in Mexico City. Lupita moved to the USA in 1999 where she has worked in different companies in the areas of advertising and marketing. She is fluent in both Spanish and English.



Laila Lawrence, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Hello! I am Laila Lawrence and I am thrilled to be a part of this incredible program. My husband and I have been blessed with three incredible children, a daughter who is

7 years old and twin boys that are 3 years of age. We have lived in the Atlanta area for 16 years, and consider this our home. We began this journey in 2011, when our daughter was diagnosed at 18 months old. She did pass her newborn screen. We learned the genesis of her hearing loss was due to Pendred's. This was the very first case of hearing loss in either of our families. During that time, her hearing loss progressed and in May of 2012, she became a recipient of a cochlear implant. She currently is bimodal, and utilizes a hearing aid in her opposite ear. In late 2013, we were blessed again with twin boys. Due to our experience with our oldest, we were on a different path at delivery. Both boys were put through extensive hearing evaluations, due to the history of our daughter. We learned that in fact one of the twins did not pass his newborn screen. With further evaluation, it was confirmed that one of our twin boys had also inherited Pendred's. In May of 2015, our son became a recipient of a cochlear implant. Similar to big sister, he also is currently bimodal.

We are so grateful for the community that we met on this journey. Friends that have become family, and we could not have gone through this without their support and guidance. We are so very thankful for each of them, and could not imagine our lives any different. I hope to be able to provide the same nurturing environment for future families. We can do this together.



Janne' Sharpe, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Hi, I am Janne' Sharpe! I am a Georgia native and currently I reside in Senoia, GA. I have spent my career working in surgery as a Surgical Assistant and I am currently the Office Manager for a local physician's office. My husband, Russ, has been a Fire Fighter for 29 years. Together we have three children. Clint, my "bonus son" who won my heart when Russ and I began dating. He is 26 years old and an Electrician Apprentice. My daughter, Ansley, is 21 and is a student at Kennesaw State University studying Criminal Justice and hopes to be a Paralegal. My son, Alec, is 16 years old and was born in my heart. Alec has been the greatest blessing to our family through the gift of adoption. I prayed for this child and

cherish the moment he was placed in my arms.

When Alec was 14 months old he was diagnosed with a moderate-severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss that we later learned was progressive in nature. Alec wore hearing aids until he was six years old when he underwent surgery for his first cochlear implant; his second surgery was when he was 8 years old. Alec is now a junior in high school and thriving. He is an honor student and recently had the opportunity to do a summer internship for Engineering at Georgia Tech. He is a Percussionist in the Marching Band.

When we first learned of Alec's hearing loss I found myself searching for as much information as possible to help me learn how to help my son. I learned that the greatest gift you can give your child is to be the best advocate you can on their behalf. Helping to educate others that you do what is necessary and what works for your child to be successful is crucial. We are all individuals and we all learn by different modalities. I was blessed to have many individuals from teachers to therapists to physicians who offered guidance and support during our journey and I want to give back to our community and be that person to offer hope and encouragement to families. I am excited to be a part of the Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side program. I look forward to joining you on this journey, offering support when needed, lifting you up and researching options with you or just being your shoulder to lean on. Thank you for letting me join you and your family down this path.



Beth Flaherty, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Our family is the perfect size for us: One mom, one boy, and one cat! I have been teaching science for 22 years; mostly middle school and some high school. My son, Wyatt, is 10 years old and just beginning 5th grade. He enjoys golf, football, and baseball. He can rattle off statistics about his favorite teams and players just for fun. He enjoys meeting new people and finding out their favorite sports teams! Wyatt is completely deaf in both ears and wears bilateral cochlear implants. He was diagnosed rather late, 2 years and 9 months. He was implanted 3 months later and activated just one week shy of his 3rd birthday. We didn't know the cause of his deafness for a long time, but, in hindsight I think he may

have been born deaf and just not caught. We recently had a genetic test done and it turns out he has the Connexin 26 gene for deafness. He did not have language for the first 3 years of his life. We are currently trying to pour as much language into him as possible, whether it is speech or sign. We use both at home. He also attends speech therapy five times a week. He attends school in Richmond County and Wyatt attends a "center" type of school where most of the deaf children in the county attend. He started there for pre-K3 in a DHH class. He now spends most of his time mainstreamed with an interpreter. He loves school and enjoys making friends. Hands & Voices was that lighthouse of hope when I first learned of Wyatt's hearing loss. I really was in a sea of darkness, scared and alone. The people who came to me from H&V helped me feel like I was not alone. They gave me the resources and encouragement I needed to help Wyatt. There is usually at least one article in every quarterly newsletter that brings cathartic tears to my eyes. Wyatt and I are no longer alone in this journey.



Julia Williams, GA H&V Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Julia Williams is the proud mom of two boys that are very different and surprise her every day in their own unique ways. Her oldest was born premature and after a stay in the NICU, he was diagnosed with Auditory Neuropathy. Julia and her son have traveled to many appointments and meetings over the years and she is hopeful that some of her experiences can help other families navigate this crazy journey they are embarking upon. When her son was a baby there were times when she felt very overwhelmed and scared and the people that helped her the most were the other parents she was able to meet through organizations like Georgia Hands & Voices. Living in a rural town, she struggled to find services for her son and was not only a new mom, but a mom of a child with special needs. Since that time her son has been in all kinds of

therapies, private and public schools, and utilized numerous forms of technology to enhance his hearing, speech, and development. None of it was without bumps in the road.....well some were bumps and some felt like mountains. Julia feels very strongly that every parent and child has a different story and circumstance and that there is not one "right" path for each child. She hopes that she can be a friend to other parents and help them sort through their bumps and celebrate their outstanding moments, like other families have for her. Her favorite thing in the whole world, is watching her son grow into a caring, compassionate, hardworking, and positive child with two cochlear implants on his head.