



*Jared Hill, pediatric cochlear implant user, is pictured with Rep. Howard Sanderford, Sen. Tom Butler, Rep. Phil Williams, Rep. Mike Ball and Sen. Arthur Orr (not pictured: Rep. Mac McCutcheon).*

## Community Support “Brings Home” Pediatric Audiology to Huntsville Hospital

As a parent, it's shocking enough to learn that your child is hearing impaired - and at the very least, challenging, to learn there is little you can do for them locally. **Tammy Reed**, whose son **Connor** was diagnosed with bilateral profound sensorineural hearing loss at 2 ½ months old, describes her feeling of helplessness, “We had never before faced anything we couldn't work harder to change.” Until recently, this was a difficult reality for north Alabama parents of children with hearing impairment, because there were few options available. Fortunately though, thanks to the outstanding support of philanthropists in the community, a comprehensive Pediatric Audiology program at Huntsville Hospital for Women & Children is a realized vision

soon to become a reality this spring.

Hearing loss is the most common birth defect, with approximately 1,300 north Alabama infants requiring extensive screenings each year. Premature infants who are patients in the Neonatal ICU for more than five days, are at high risk for developing hearing loss, as are pediatric cancer patients given ototoxic medications associated with their cancer treatment. In many cases, follow-up testing and therapy services require monthly visits for three years or more; and until now, the nearest facilities were located in Birmingham and Nashville.

The days of commuting, missed work and school days, and travel expenses will be alleviated thanks to the new program at Huntsville Hospital

for Women & Children. Services will include diagnostic and follow-up testing for hearing impaired children and cochlear implant (CI) patients; speech therapy services for development; education, guidance and support for families as they navigate the medical system; and care schedules for hearing-impaired children. This means that families like the Reeds will have relief in the form of comprehensive *local care*.

**Andrea Hill** is a passionate advocate for hearing-impaired children and their families. Andrea and her husband **Steve** are the parents of three children born profoundly deaf. They made more than 500 trips to a center in Birmingham for their children to receive appropriate services, a routine

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that required many sacrifices for the entire family. The Hills recognized immediately the need for local services, and made a generous lead gift in hopes that Huntsville Hospital would establish a pediatric audiology program. Thanks to their generous support, and donations made by local organizations including the **Greater Huntsville Rotary Club, AEGIS Serves, Delta Zeta Alumnae**, and 100 local women who are members of the Foundation's **Millennium Society**, most of the funds needed were raised. The final funding was provided by north Alabama State Legislators who enthusiastically

supported the effort. **Representatives Phil Williams, Mike Ball, Howard Sanderford** and **Mac McCutcheon**, and **Senators Tom Butler** and **Arthur Orr** were instrumental in making local pediatric audiology services a reality.

Andrea is grateful for the support provided by the community. "I am thrilled that our state legislators and many others have been so generous to support the development of comprehensive services here. Huntsville Hospital's new Pediatric Audiology Center, coupled with the expert services of the staff, will make a tremendous practical difference in the

lives of families like ours in the Tennessee Valley, and overall outcomes for children with hearing loss will improve," she says.

Indeed, the unwavering commitment of Madison County's philanthropic community is exemplary. Huntsville Hospital Foundation is proud to be part of such an impressive illustration of how our community consistently unites to support those in need. And pleased that children like Connor can now receive the care they need right here at home.