

How My Disability Shaped My Decision to Study Nursing!

By Caitlyn M.J. Smith

I cannot hear the beautiful songs that the birds sing in spring or the peaceful pitter patter of a soft rainstorm but I will not let that define me and my future. The deaf and hard of hearing community may miss out on the hearing opportunities but with some support and resources it should never define the future aspirations or goals of a better world.

I was born with a mild to severe hearing loss and was aided at six months. Hearing loss was typically depicted one way: at the expense of an elderly person who was “comically” deaf. These portrayals subconsciously taught me that deafness must be concealed. I was alone in this “normal hearing” world. My hearing aids are often the first thing people notice about me, and while my hearing loss is not the whole of who I am, it has shaped my life but it will not define me.

As a child, I attended audio verbal therapy for several years. It may be surprising to hear that I was then enrolled in a French Immersion program. Since I had no prior exposure to French, this was an enormous risk, as it could affect my overall successes. Early on, I felt embarrassed and frustrated as I often had to ask others to repeat themselves, and I struggled to make out the nuances of the sounds that seemed to come easily to my classmates. However, I was soon given the tools to succeed. I received priority seating near the front of the class and the use of an FM system, a small radio-like device that transmitted my teacher's voice directly to my hearing aids. These were essential in helping me learn French as well as I did. With perseverance and much practice, I am happy to say that I overcame my initial challenges. I achieved my DELF (Diplome d'etudes en langue francaise). By studying this language, I gained trust in my abilities. I also learned the importance of pushing through difficult times and studying hard. These were some of the lessons I want to share to others with disabilities to encourage that with hard work and dedication you can make a better future for themselves. Along with the hard work sometimes we need resources to assist and support those with disabilities. I believe the future will fear the loss of those missed accomplishments from those individuals if they never got the support they needed.

Although my experience with acquiring accommodations may have been successful, I am under no illusions that this is the case for everyone, and I recognize that I am privileged and received the support in many ways. Among my friends with disabilities, especially invisible ones, I have seen deep frustrations with the slow pace and barriers to accessing these essential supports. This is unfortunate and defeats their purpose. If they are not timely and readily available, are they truly there at all? How bright is their future?

My personal experience with hearing loss has made me realize that even a small change can make a huge impact in improving someone's life and future. I want to be part of that change for others. I have chosen my career path in Nursing so I can give back to the health communities and make sure all children/adults have the resources and knowledge needed to achieve their goals to make the next generations future just as bright as mine. I am not sure what that looks like now but I am in the direction of learning about our Health Care and what needs to change for those with disabilities to continue to present opportunities for everyone in our community so the future can be brighter for us all. The fact that I am not where I want to be yet is my motivation to succeed. Better Opportunities, Better Future.



Ontario

Ontario Secondary School Diploma Diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario

This Diploma is granted to
Ce diplôme est décerné à

CAITLYN SMITH

a student of
élève de


Elmira District Secondary School

who has fulfilled the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma
in accordance with the provisions of the Ministry of Education, Ontario.

qui a rempli les exigences prescrites pour l'obtention du diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario,
en vertu des dispositions du ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario.

Dated at **Elmira, Ontario**
Délivré à

the **29th** day of **June 2023**
ce **29** jour de


Minister of Education /Ministre de l'Éducation


Principal of School/Directeur ou directrice de l'école



April 12, 2023

Western Student Number: 251350525

Caitlyn Smith
28 Nightingale Crescent
Elmira, ON N3B 1B1

Dear Caitlyn,

We would like to personally congratulate you on your acceptance to the Western-Fanshawe Collaborative BScN program and welcome you to the beginning of your journey in the profession of nursing. Western University and Fanshawe College, both located in London, Ontario, are partners in offering a four-year collaborative Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) degree. The first two years of the program are offered simultaneously at both Western and Fanshawe College, with a common curriculum at both sites. All students study at Western for the final two years of the program. The program is offered in a blended format, with a mix of both in-person and online courses as well as clinical placements beginning in year 2.

At Western and Fanshawe you will find strong networks of teachers, mentors, counsellors, support services, and friends with whom to share your learning experiences. In our Nursing program, you will discover supportive learning environments that provide students with excellent opportunities for learning and professional growth. These opportunities are designed, revised and implemented by faculty and students working together for excellence in all academic and practice endeavours.

Our program has clinical placements in many settings including clinics, community agencies, and teaching hospitals within London and Southwestern Ontario. In addition, we offer state-of-the-art clinical education suites where students have the opportunities to take advantage of a variety of exciting learning activities that simulate patient situations to prepare them for clinical placements. Students will need to travel for clinical placements, and many are outside the city of London. By accepting this offer of admission you are acknowledging the requirement to travel outside of London and that you will be responsible for any expenses associated with this travel. Students entering this program need to seriously consider outside responsibilities related to finances, work, and family due to the time commitment and workload within the courses.

Students must also be aware that most placement partners (ie: hospitals, long-term care facilities, community clinics), have pre-placement policies for students including mandatory vaccination requirements. Students will be required to be compliant with those placement partner policies in order to attend placements in those facilities. Should students not be compliant with those policies, and therefore not eligible to attend placements, it cannot be guaranteed that students will be able to progress through the program and meet program and graduation requirements.

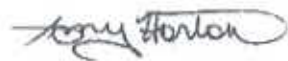
After successfully completing year 3, there is a unique opportunity for students to immediately enter our Accelerated Year 4 (AY4) stream. Students in AY4 begin their 4th year in May and complete the program by the end of the fall term, four months ahead of the main program. Students participating in the AY4 stream have more diversity in their choice of placement opportunities in their fourth year as well as smaller theoretical nursing class sizes. Participation in the AY4 stream is voluntary and allows students to write their NCLEX-RN licensing exam and enter the workforce earlier.

Nurses are in high demand in London, Ontario. If you accept this offer in the Western-Fanshawe Collaborative BScN program, you may be eligible to apply for the new **Ontario Learn and Stay Grant**. Funded by the Government of Ontario, this grant will cover your tuition, textbooks, and other

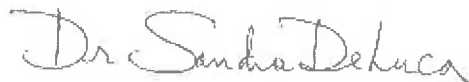
direct educational costs if you commit to work in the London region for a certain term after graduation. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit ontario.ca/LearnAndStay.

Congratulations on your achievements. We hope that you will accept our offer of a place in the Western-Fanshawe Collaborative BScN program. Incoming students will receive additional communication in June regarding course registration, preparation, and program requirements. In September, we look forward to personally welcoming you to the class of 2027.

Sincerely,



Amy Horton, MN, NP-PHC
Director, Undergraduate Nursing Programs
Western Site



Dr. Sandra Deluca, RN, PhD
Chair, School of Nursing
Fanshawe Site

CANADA
ONTARIO

NAME - NOM

SMITH, CAITLYN MARIE JANNETTE

DATE OF BIRTH - DATE DE NAISSANCE

APRIL 13, 2005

BIRTHPLACE - LIEU DE NAISSANCE

KITCHENER

DATE OF REGISTRATION
DATE D'ENREGISTREMENT

JULY 04, 2005

ISSUED IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
DELIVRÉ DANS LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

AUGUST 19, 2005

Joel M. Hartman
(DEPUTY REGISTRAR GENERAL)
(REGISTRAR GÉNÉRAL ADJOINT DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL)

CERTIFIED EXTRACT FROM BIRTH REGISTRATION
EXTRAIT CERTIFIÉ CONFORMÉ DE L'ENREGISTREMENT DE NAISSANCE
FORM 28 VITAL STATISTICS ACT 11128



CERTIFICATE NUMBER
NUMÉRO DU CERTIFICAT

50018442-001

SEX - SEXE

F

REGISTRATION NUMBER
NUMÉRO D'ENREGISTREMENT

2005-05-026552

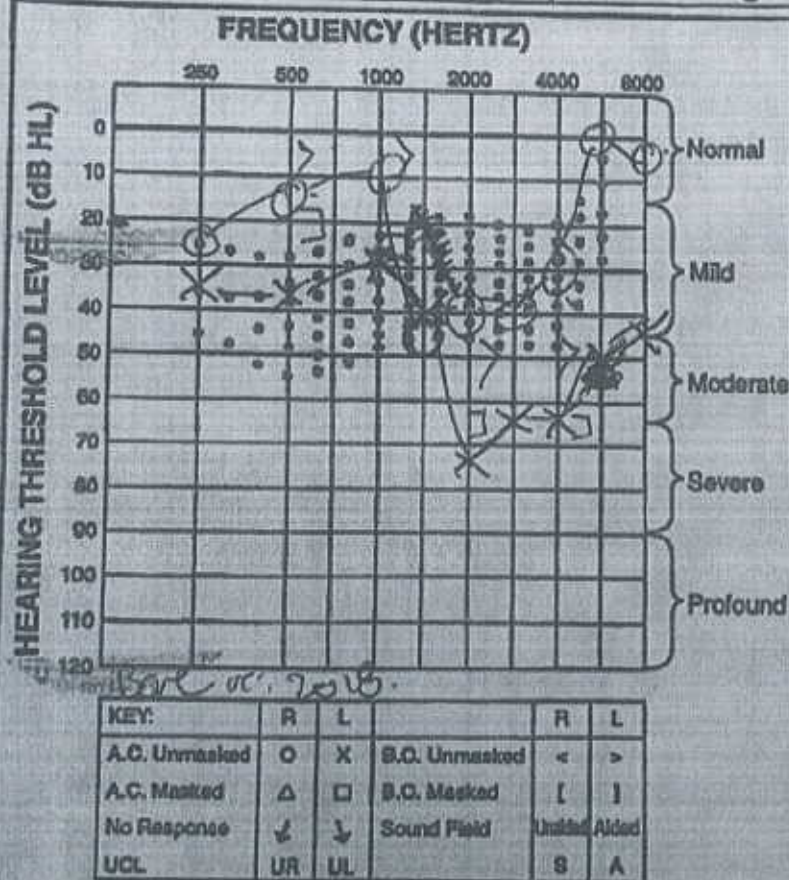
Jim Watson
(REGISTRAR GENERAL)
(LE REGISTRAR GÉNÉRAL DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL)

Ear & Hearing Clinic

JULIANA SCHLEGEL - DOCTOR OF AUDIOLOGY

- ☒ **WILLIAMSBURG** 629-1167 Fischer-Hallman Rd., Kitchener, ON N2E 4H8 T: (519) 743-7000 F: (519) 743-7810
☒ **CLOCK TOWER WELLNESS CENTRE** 60 Arthur St. S., Suite 101, Elmira, ON N3B 2M8 T: (519) 669-4425 F: (519) 669-2351
☐ **PALMERSTON** 107 William Street, Unit B, Palmerston, ON N0G 2P0 T: (519) 417-7000 F: (519) 417-7001

NAME: Caitlyn Smith D.O.B.: April 13/2005 DATE: March 01/23
 ADDRESS: 28 Nightingale Cr., Elmira, ON, N3B 1B1
 PHONE: 519 669 3461 REFERRED BY: _____ FAMILY PHYSICIAN: _____
 SoundField ☐ VRA ☐ Play ☐ Conventional ☒ Consent ☒ RELIABILITY: Good ☒ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ HEALTH NUMBER: _____



Inserts ☐ Inserts + Earmold ☐ Phones ☐ Uvo-voice ☐ Taped ☒

	R	L	SF
SPEECH RECEPTION THRESHOLD	20	40	
WORD RECOGNITION	100%	88%	100%
MOST COMFORTABLE LEVEL	65	80	
UNCOMFORTABLE LEVEL	90	105	
AIDED SRT	1	1	
AIDED WR	1	1	

OTOACOUSTIC EMISSIONS

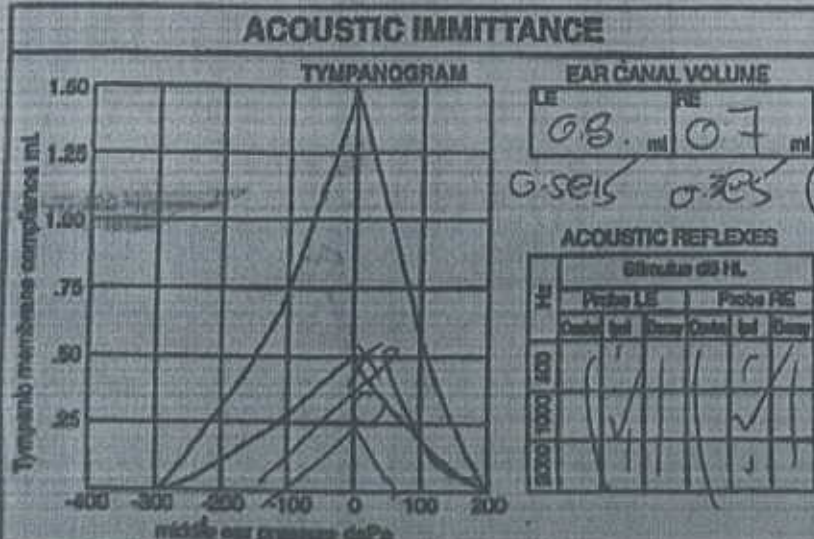
HEARTZ	R	L	Pass SF	Fail SF
3000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Otology:

UNR B/L

Conclusion/Recommendations:

Hearing stable re. 2020 Audiogram



Borderline mild, sloping to moderate SNHL notch, rising to normal hearing

Mild sloping to moderate severe SNHL

Rec → Continued use of AIC N/A

→ Annual assessment

L. Schlegel

Juliana Schlegel, Alison Burton, Rachel Dingle
 Stefan Wasowicz, He-Yoon Joo, Emily Glas
 AUDIOLOGISTS, Reg. CASLPO

Kim Nguyen, Karen Fritsch, Brandy Cole
 HEARING INSTRUMENT SPECIALISTS



Juliana Schlegel, B.A. (HONS.) M.Cl.Sc., Au.D. - Doctor of Audiology & Associates

June 2, 2023

Caitlyn Smith

DOB: 13/04/2005

Re: University Accommodations

To whom it may concern:

Caitlyn Smith presents with a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and wears binaural amplification (hearing aids). Given this hearing loss, Caitlyn is at a functional auditory disadvantage relative to her hearing peers while pursuing post-secondary studies.

Hearing loss, even with appropriate amplification, can place limitations on the audibility and clarity of sound. In particular, distance, background noise, and poor acoustic environments will make it more difficult for the individual to clearly and effortlessly understand target speech. Increased listening effort in all situations can result in increased cognitive fatigue which can impact attention and memory. Limitations on the size of the "listening bubble" imposed by microphone capabilities on hearing aids creates fewer opportunities to "overhear" conversational interactions resulting in fewer opportunities for incidental learning, impacting group work and social interactions. In individuals with congenital or early-onset hearing loss, increased auditory barriers can also result in lower literacy levels relative to their peers.

Caitlyn will require extra supports during her post-secondary studies including an FM system in the classroom and to provide connectivity options for computer audio. Without appropriate access to technology, Caitlyn may fail to hear properly. This will directly impact her ability to remember and process new information. Please note that an instructor who "speaks loudly" is insufficient; in the case that an FM system is in place instructor use is *required*.

In addition, should Caitlyn feel it necessary, she may benefit from the following:

- Access to lecture notes/slides prior to class
- Specific seating (close to instructor to access lip reading, if public health requirements are in place as in the covid pandemic, teachers should be provided with clear masks or excused from mask requirements)

- Note takers
- Captions on video content (online and in class)—consideration should be given to the accuracy of the type of captioning being used.
- Repeating/Re-phrasing of student questions/comments by the instructor if students are not speaking into a microphone connected to the FM system
- Extended examination time
- Flexible course delivery formats and exam formats
- Reduced course load

Different students with hearing loss will struggle in different ways, and supports should be individualized to the student.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our clinic.

Sincerely,



Rachel Dingle,
Ph.D., M.Cl.Sc., reg. CASLPO
Audiologist