

ONLINE FEATURE | Amplified: Living Loudly While Growing Up with Hearing Loss

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By Katie M. Colella and Katie Farnsworth

This article contains spoilers—you may want to [click here](#) to listen to the podcast before reading.

We grew up a couple towns away from one another. We overlapped in high school for one year where we ran together in track. We even share the same name—Katie. One of us grew up with hearing loss; one with typical hearing. And after going our separate ways in high school, we would not cross paths again for 12 years—as pediatric audiologists and colleagues at the Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago.

Before we dive more into the story about a story, let’s simplify who is who:

- **Katie F:** Grew up with hearing loss.
- **Katie C:** Grew up with typical hearing.

Because we bring two different perspectives—interviewer and interviewee—we wanted to share how our individual angles created this beautiful project.

Interviewer: Katie C.

Amplified: Presented by Lurie Children's was initially created as a resource for families. It is an opportunity to sit shotgun while a family navigated the rest of us through their journey. Before we settled on a name, it was simply called "Audiology Podcast" in a Microsoft Word document. I approached Katie F about the general idea and asked if she wanted to be part of it. She never hesitated.



Katie Colella, Katie Farnsworth, Eileen Radasevich, and Rudy Radasevich on the first day of recording.

I only knew parts of Katie's story, so the next step was a pre-interview with Katie and her parents, Eileen and Rudy Radasevich, at their kitchen table. Because that's the type of people they are, not only did they share their story, but they welcomed me into their home to develop this project.

I sat down at the microphone on day one of recording, hoping to create something to benefit families. I never imagined how much I would learn as an audiologist. This experience humbled me. Pediatric audiologists are the most appropriate professionals to guide a family of a child through a hearing loss diagnosis and amplification management, but our lens into the lives of the families we work with is limited. Near the beginning of Episode 1, I asked the Radasevichs about the day Katie F was diagnosed, and Eileen answered, “Well, there was time leading up for that...” and launched into the concerns and signs they witnessed that drove them to get Katie’s hearing tested. Every time I hear that clip, I cringe a bit to myself because, for me, the story typically begins at the diagnosis, but for families, it often begins much sooner. I reflect on that moment in hopes to broaden my perspective beyond the soundbooth.

In a later episode, Katie F. discussed the wonderful Lurie Children’s audiologist who cared for her: our current Clinical Coordinator, Dr. Joy Ringger. “I never felt that she (Joy) really tried to connect with me in a way she knew she couldn’t...” We must do our best for our families with the skills we have, but sometimes it is best to just sit back and listen. It’s okay to be on the sidelines for these stories.

The rest of the story is best heard by listening to the podcast.

[Listen to Podcast](#)

Interviewee: Katie F.

My hearing loss was diagnosed a few months after my second birthday. I was extremely fortunate to have the incredible support from my parents and the Naperville 203 school district, which allowed me to flourish. To be honest, I rarely thought about my hearing loss as a kid. I would use so many other defining characteristics about me before mentioning my hearing loss: daughter, sister, friend.



Katie Farnsworth and her little sister, Julie Radasevich.

Then, one day, I met a well-intentioned audiologist who tried to empathize with me while he manipulated my earmolds due to a nagging sore in my ear. I quickly felt a disconnect. Within minutes, I decided I wanted to be a pediatric audiologist and connect with patients and their families. I never looked back.

Catch Me if You Can!

Girls' Track



Girls' Track: First Row: Maria Sennett, Stephanie Auxier, Tracy Bredar, Jen Brown, Jenny Weizeorick, Emily Rickert, Samantha Ried, Kristine McInerney, Kristine Gavin, Cat Blaney, Corie Sanders Second Row: Erin Schrieber, Rachel Carrol, Amy Kohoutek, Katie Cich, Jeanine Bentley, Elizabeth Lynch, Joelle Parks, Aleks Strub, Joanna Sekowski, Atlee Murphy, Ruth Swedler, Michelle Ozog, Ginna Dirienzo, Molly McGrath Third Row: Stephanie Boyd, Carolyn Rendos, Caitie McClain, Stacey Weizeorick, Jessica Burjek, Kerry McGowan, Abby Higgins, Meredith Griesemer, Caitlin Novak, Hannah Fisher, Kristie Eickhoff, Lena White, Margarita Mankus, Emma Frazer, Ana Acosta, Mary Blaida Fourth Row: Maura Burns, Jenny Bresnahan, Kirsten Mendoza, Cori Breedlove, Lizzie McSherry, Molly McSherry, Kait Allen, Lisa Sechroek, Katie Scheidemantel, Amy Nepywoda, Sarah Kula, Emily Meador, Lauren Madigan, Monica Sarkin Fifth Row: Mr. Brooks, Amy Frigo, **Katie Radasevich**, Natalie Kress, Ryann Smith, **Katie Masterson**, Margaret Matte, Bryanne Heming, Erin Frazer, Katie Kelly, Kathleen Boyce, Katie Ekins, Christine Quigley, Laura Menacho, Coach Pallardy, Coach Johnson.

Katie Farnsworth (maiden name: Radasevich) and Katie Colella (maiden name: Masterson) in their high school track team photo.

My adolescent and young adult years were filled with many significant moments: high school graduation, Division I athletics, graduate school classes. Yet, one of the best moments was reconnecting with Katie C. at Lurie Children's Hospital, over a decade after competing together at our high school track state finals.

I really can't explain the admiration I felt. She has such a passion for children with hearing loss. When Katie C. suggested the idea of this podcast, I immediately jumped on board. What a fantastic way to share my experience, with the goal that we can connect with others and provide education, humor, and hope.

Diving into the recording sessions, I don't think either Katie C. or I really knew what was about to be unveiled. Obviously, I was able to share my experiences, but my parents, sisters, and husband were also able to share their stories. My mom had the opportunity to relay her "out of body" experience when she learned of my hearing loss. My sisters reveled in sharing their thoughts about "accessibility." My husband offered his perceptions about parenting and finding effective ways for us to communicate.

Our hope is that this podcast, while detailing a story that began more than 30 years ago, resonates with families today. Technology aside, many of the experiences and feelings that me and my family felt still ring true.

Besides, my story is far from over.

Team Katie

We are grateful to everyone who assisted us in this project, but there are a few individuals who helped post-production whom we did not get to thank during the podcast credits. Jeffrey Chow for eleventh hour editing needs, Carmen Koloskov for liaising with the podcasting host site, Katie Fanella for setting up the [Amplified: Presented by Lurie Children's \(APBLC\) website](#) and our colleague, Dr. Kristen Cortese, for managing our Instagram presence along with all of our department's content on [@lurierehabservices](#).

We are floored by the early success and support of the podcast. As we write this piece, APBLC was released less than a month ago, and has been downloaded or played directly from [here](#) over 1,800 times. Our hope is that it continues to reach the patients, families, students, and clinicians who can find a sense of community in it.

We recognize Katie's story is one of millions about living with hearing loss and hope APBLC encourages others to stand up and share their truth. The recent representation of hearing loss and Deaf culture in mainstream media has been inspiring, but we want to keep the narrative thriving. Please share your stories! Whether it be with us, in a book, via social media, on a poster, through artwork or whatever medium moves you...we are listening.

Amplified: Presented by Lurie Children's is available with transcripts [here](#) and on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, iHeartRadio, Stitcher and TuneIn.

This article is a part of the [March/April 2022 Audiology Today issue](#).