

A family uses its strength to help others



Nancy Rokos

Noa David, 6, looks at her photo album with her mother, Lisa David.

By Sally Friedman Correspondent

Her favorite Barbies live in a pink world, and Noa David clearly loves the color. It's even the color of a temporary cast on her arm after a recent fall.

As she gives her attention to the dolls, their accessories, and to a new toy camera that has stolen her heart, the 6-year-old with huge brown eyes and long brown hair also readily shows a visitor another touch of pink in her life: her hearing aids. Of course, they're pink, too.

For Noa, these hearing aids are hardly just an accessory. Diagnosed with moderate hearing loss in both ears at birth, she wears them in order to better communicate with the world. Her parents, Rabbi Ben David, spiritual leader of Adath Emanu-El in Mount Laurel, and Lisa David, recently shared how they first learned of their firstborn's condition.

"We were, of course, very excited when we became parents, and our heads were kind of spinning when we learned that Noa's newborn hearing test showed some problem," said the rabbi. "There were more tests, and by the time our daughter was 6 weeks old, we had the diagnosis of moderate hearing loss."

From the start, these new parents made a deep and abiding commitment to do everything they needed to for their daughter, and that most of all, they would be sure that she grew up with a strong sense of confidence and pride in herself.

Lisa David, whose pregnancy was perfectly normal, recalls Noa's early introduction to hearing aids. "She would pull them out, and just getting her to sit still so we could get them on her was a struggle. But very soon, Noa herself realized that with her hearing aids, she could connect with the world. As she got older, she'd remind us to put them back on after her bath."

These days, Noa holds her own in the household, with two younger brothers, who have no hearing issues, as her playmates. She attends kindergarten at Springville Elementary School, where two of her classmates also are hearing impaired.

Her speech is perfect, but she gets supplemental speech therapy, which is geared to social issues such as eye contact and initiating dialogue, which tend to be more challenging for children with hearing issues.

“We’re determined to teach Noa that she can thrive and succeed, and we really believe that we’re blessed to have a little girl who is so intelligent, so alive and so spirited,” said Ben David, who admittedly finds himself even more aware of those in his congregation, and in the wider world, with challenges. “We want our gift to Noa to learn to advocate for herself, and have a strong sense of her potential.”

The other gift that the Davids have given their daughter is their own activism. Lisa, who has a demanding career as a director of camping for a national Jewish organization, and the rabbi, are deeply involved in the Hearing Loss Association of America’s Garden State-NJ Walk4Hearing event on Oct. 20 in West Windsor.

“Noa has benefited tremendously from the support of numerous therapists, teachers, audiologists and advocates,” said Ben David.

The event, the largest walk of its kind, is taking place in various cities across the country.

“The goal is to raise funds for programs and services, and also to raise public awareness about hearing loss,” he said, noting that another overall mission is to eradicate the stigma that sometimes is associated with hearing loss.

Congregants of Adath Emanu-El will be among the walkers, and the Davids are hoping that other local residents may join “Noa’s Team.”

Noa is well-versed in the event, and is proud to explain that it’s all about her hearing aids, and others who share her condition.

“I’m going!” she said, eyes dancing. “And I’m walking fast!”

No doubt that she will.