

Parsippany H.S. student's efforts, despite hearing loss, lead to a college scholarship - NorthJersey.com

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Margaret Hsu, who overcame profound hearing loss to graduate from [Parsippany](#) Hills High School as a member of the National Arts Honor Society and earn admission to the freshman class at the School of Visual Arts, has won a prestigious College Scholarship Award from the Hearing Loss Association of New Jersey.

HLA-NJ President Linda Schaab said, "We are proud to honor the achievements of Margaret... with our scholarship. Diagnosed with profound hearing loss in her teens, and aided by hearing aids, lip reading and other assistive listening technologies, she went on to graduate from [Parsippany](#) Hills High School with grades that won her admission to the National Arts Honor Society, in addition to maintaining an active schedule of both community and extracurricular activities."

"It is difficult for people with normal hearing to realize how hard it is to do what Maggie has succeeded in doing," Schaab said. "Maggie has mastered the use of several different types of assistive listening technologies, including hearing aids, note takers, CART systems and Bluetooth technologies that pick up sounds from various electronic sources and direct them into her hearing aids. But, nothing can make hearing loss go away, or give her what would be regarded as "normal" hearing. From the classroom to her other activities, Maggie has faced a daily struggle to understand teachers, classmates and other volunteers she works with to overcome the stigma that is too often attached to serious hearing loss."

Hsu, now in her freshman year at the School of Visual Arts, said that she'd decided early on to not let herself be viewed as someone with a "disability." In her high school days, she says, rather than being a deaf high school student, she was a high school student who "just happened to be deaf."

"After moving from Taiwan, where I received little to no help, and settling for a couple of years at a private school in New York City, which also offered no hearing support help, I moved to New Jersey where I had to essentially start over again for a third time in my life. I was 16 when I moved to [Parsippany](#)," she said. "Just then, the most inspiring person came into my life. My new school, Parsippany Hills, had an entire hearing support system. Brand new equipment helped me make up for my lost hearing, and the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing inspired me to take the first real steps into the world of people who could hear. She helped me through every bump in the road and encouraged me to wear my much detested aids. With them, I gained self-confidence. I found my passion, my love and strength in art."

"How did I get to where I am now? I proudly hold my head up high and tell myself: I was born hearing impaired, but I couldn't be more proud of myself and that's all thanks to the people who contributed their love and kindness into making me who I am today."

Pamela Cotton, Hsu's counselor in high school, said that "Prior to coming to [Parsippany](#) Hills High School, Maggie did not have the support she needed to maneuver in a hearing world. Our district has provided her with all the tools she needed to perform at her academic best. Maggie is described as fun, kind, confident and creative. She plans a major in illustrations in visual arts. She hopes to illustrate books or be a general artist.

"Upon moving to [Parsippany](#), Maggie found her niche. Our district provided her with multiple support

systems to allow her to function in a hearing world. She continues to lip read and uses an FM transmitter in classes where she can 'hear' the instruction."

Erica Pizza, Hsu's art teacher said, "Maggie is a creative and confident student who has overcome many challenges in her life. Her dedication and commitment to a future in art is extremely evident, as she always gives 100 percent. For a student with her challenges, she doesn't let anything set her back. During class time, she is extremely focused on her artwork, allowing little room for distraction. Her insight and creativity show in all of her final projects. She is able to take an art concept and assignment and turn it into her own. Her written critiques regarding her own work and that of her classmates are very insightful."

HLA-NJ works to create awareness of hearing loss issues in the state of New Jersey. It is dedicated to developing a statewide network to address outreach, advocacy legislative and equal access issues that impact people with hearing loss.

For information about HLA-NJ, the New Jersey state affiliate of the Hearing Loss Association of America, contact HLA-NJ President Linda Schaab at info@hearingloss-nj.org; or visit www.hearingloss-nj.org or the HLAA's website at www.hearingloss.org.

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