

Quota International of Massillon is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization empowering women, children, the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and people with speech difficulties in Western Stark County. **Currently we are working on filling a gap left by insurance companies (Private and governmental) for equipment and services for children with hearing loss.**

As an organization we worked with officials throughout the state to require that all newborns in the state of Ohio undergo a hearing test in order to ensure early invention for those families and children that are identified. However, once the hearing test was mandated, we noticed that many insurance providers were not covering the cost of Audiology follow-up appointments or paying for equipment like hearing aids for these children. Which is how our Sound Beginnings program began, which ensured that the first set of hearing aids for any child in Stark County was covered through our organization. Our program has since been adopted by a larger non-profit in Cincinnati that does this for the entire state!

However, there are still **gaps and needs for hearing equipment. Cochlear Implants and hearing aids must be updated, much like a cell phone or other technology (approximately every 3-5 years) and the cost is a hardship for most families. A single hearing aid runs about \$2,000; so, for a child diagnosed at birth who needs aids on both sides by the time they are 18 years old (at a minimum) will have spent \$16,000 out of pocket on hearing aids alone. This price increases if you are CI user (close to \$5,000 per). None of these factors in the cost of speech therapies (many children with hearing loss struggle with spoken language), tutors or other academic help (many children with hearing loss struggle with reading/ writing and need additional support), hearing accessories (like DM systems, Bluetooth connectors, amplification microphones, water covers), or audiology appointments. These costs are in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for families who have a child with hearing loss. These families have private insurance, and their insurance companies see hearing loss as a cosmetic issue for these children. We are also seeing families on Medicaid (who have audiology coverage for appts and devices) that cannot access any accessories for their children's devices. These accessories help children access sound through digital media (TVs, Cellphones, tablets, and computers which was essential during remote instruction) and access sound in loud environments (such as gyms, amusement parks, crowded events, or even outside family gatherings). Again, the cost of these items is a great burden for these families.**

At Quota we are trying to mitigate this gap in coverage and help offset some of the cost for these families. We do this by holding fundraisers throughout the year such as our Annual Reverse Raffle, Princess Tea Party, and new for 2023, our first golf scramble, which will be known as the Dianne Day Memorial Golf Scramble.