

Quinn & Rachael



As the final donation amounts were tallied up, Quinn Blakeley (aged three) emerged as the highest individual Loud Shirt Day fundraiser for TSH. In under two weeks, Quinn's family had managed to raise a staggering \$11,000 for the Western Australian based not-for-profit.

Quinn was born with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, which was identified at her newborn hearing screening. Although she has been wearing hearing aids since she was five weeks old, Quinn's hearing loss is, unfortunately, progressive. This means that she faces an uncertain hearing future.

"We are going down the path to see whether cochlear implants will be right for her," explains Rachael.

"As Quinn's hearing loss hasn't been typical, and we don't have any known causes for her hearing loss, she falls into a grey area where specialists are uncertain whether she can get by with the hearing aids or needs additional support.

"We do know that the earlier the intervention, the better for her."

Thankfully, Quinn is surrounded by a very supportive community, including TSH's Chatterbox program, an early intervention program with a multidisciplinary approach supporting children with hearing loss learn to hear and speak.

Quinn's mum Rachael hopes that along with fundraising, Loud Shirt Day helps people understand more about hearing loss, particularly among children.

"I know TSH will do great things with the money, but raising awareness of children with hearing loss is vital," she says. "I'd like to see more acceptance, understanding and education for anyone with hearing loss.

"Children with hearing loss have to work so much harder to simply try and keep up with listening.

"Classroom environments are loud spaces, with many voices and distance listening. With all these additional factors comes listening fatigue and then, often, behaviour challenges. Simply being aware of what's needed, particularly in learning environments, improves outcomes for these kids.

"We viewed so many different schools before making the decision to move to a TSH-supported school."

Quinn will start pre-kindy next year. While the extent of her hearing loss and the treatments required remain uncertain, there is no doubt that her charismatic energy and strong support network will help her flourish throughout her hearing journey.

