

VIETNAM

Caregiver Name: Thi Hein
Age at Implantation: 2

Child: Quang Thái
Age Today: 9

My son was born on May 11, 2017, in Dien Bien Province, a heroic yet remote region of Vietnam where daily life remains challenging and access to advanced medical facilities and modern equipment is still limited. He came into our lives like any other child — healthy, cheerful, with bright eyes and a constant smile that filled our home with joy. No one in our family could have imagined that behind that innocent smile lay a long and arduous journey ahead.

The greatest challenge began when I slowly realized that my child did not respond to sound. He did not startle at loud noises, did not turn when called, and only reacted to vibrations or physical touch. At first, our family tried to reassure ourselves by believing that perhaps he was simply developing more slowly than other children. However, when he reached twelve months of age — an age when children usually begin to babble, speak, and interact more actively — he remained completely silent.

A mother's intuition told me that I could not wait any longer, and I decided to seek medical help. We first visited the provincial general hospital, then continued our journey to a pediatric hospital in Hanoi — the capital of Vietnam. There, doctors diagnosed him with congenital deafness and advised cochlear implantation as the only viable option. At that moment, my world seemed to collapse. My heart tightened, tears streamed down uncontrollably, and I held my smiling child in my arms while feeling an indescribable pain deep inside.



Beyond the emotional shock, another overwhelming challenge soon emerged — the financial burden and geographical distance. The cost of a cochlear implant alone was nearly 500 million VND, not including travel, accommodation, and long-term rehabilitation expenses. Our family consisted of farmers and low-income civil servants, and our home was 500 to 600 kilometers away from Hanoi. The figure and the distance felt almost impossible to overcome.

Fortunately, in our darkest moments, we were not alone. **Both sides of our family became our strongest support, with grandparents, relatives, and friends lending a helping hand, borrowing wherever possible so that our son could have a chance to hear. Alongside them were dedicated doctors and medical staff who not only treated my child but also gave us hope and confidence.**

I am especially grateful to the surgical team at the hospital, who performed the cochlear implant surgery when my son was just two years old and weighed less than nine kilograms. The operation lasted from early morning until noon, and fortunately, it was successful.

Recovery was not easy. I still remember the day his device was activated on June 21. The day my son heard the first sound in his life marked a milestone that I will never forget. From that moment, a new journey truly began.



For nearly a year, my child and I traveled hundreds of kilometers almost every week from Dien Bien to Hanoi for device mapping, auditory training, and speech therapy. When our financial resources were exhausted, we shifted to home-based practice and returned for adjustments every three months. Through perseverance, patience, and relentless effort, my son gradually learned to recognize sounds, speak more clearly, and engage more confidently with the world around him. Each day, he became more active, joyful, and self-assured.

To me, his greatest achievement is not merely the ability to hear and speak, but his radiant smile and his growing ability to integrate into life, connect with friends, and experience a world filled with sound. Throughout this journey, I myself changed profoundly from my mindset and lifestyle to the way I embraced motherhood.

I learned to accept reality, educated myself about hearing loss and cochlear implantation, reorganized my family life to

prioritize my child's listening and speech development, and became his first teacher, patiently repeating sounds and words countless times.

More importantly, I learned to believe in my child and in myself, understanding that with enough love, persistence, and determination, he could walk his own path. The encouragement and companionship of various leaders and associations further strengthened my resolve and reminded me that we were part of a larger, caring community.

If I could offer one message to other parents of children with hearing impairment, it would be this: *never give up*. No matter how difficult the circumstances, remain resilient and steadfast in helping your child rediscover sound. Trust in your child's potential, trust in medicine, and trust in the power of love.

This journey may be long and exhausting, but its reward is an open future — a life rich in sound, color, joy, and meaning.

As a mother, my deepest wish is for my child to always be confident, love life, listen well, speak clearly, and grow up happy surrounded by the love of our family.