If I had a nickel for every time a person called me that was, asking for my mom, thinks my mother is dead; I probably would not need this scholarship. When I was younger, my CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) friends and I would keep count of how many times a caller would misunderstand “My mom/dad is deaf.” for “My mom/dad is dead.” Usually the callers would just want money, so I would just let it be.

Despite the many people who think my mother is dead, being born with a deaf mother was obviously always normal to me. I never saw it as a disability until it was about halfway through the 3rd grade and I was waiting in front of the school for my mother to pick me up. My friend’s mom pulled up in front of me, rolled her window down, and shouted “Julia! Would you like a ride home?” I kindly told her that my mother was coming to get me soon. Her face altered and she said these words that I can never erase out of my memory. She said with so much pity in her tone, “Well, yes I know this. But don’t you think she shouldn’t be driving you places? You know, because she is deaf?” I was taken back, left speechless. I bit my tongue and again told her “No thank you.” I knew my world to always be normal until this moment; Deafness was all I knew. I had a deaf mother, grandparents, great grandparents, and so many other family members. Being a part of the deaf world is something I take so much pride in. I’ve learned to ignore the list of “cannots” that hold my mother back because of her disability and embrace the beauty in this big life lesson I’ve been given. I cannot honestly tell you, the readers, that because
of my mom’s disability, I need this scholarship. Pity is not what I’m looking for, I received enough of that up until the present day. I’m looking for a chance, support, and understanding.

Despite my mother’s and my family’s disability, they are well educated, bold, great mothers and fathers, loving, and independent. Numerous people are shocked when I respond that I would rather a deaf mom and family than hearing and I would never change my roots. There is something so special about the deaf community. It is even hard to use the word “community” because the word “family” gives it more justice. I was always amazed at the fact that everyone knows each other somehow, someway. No matter where we go if, it is to the local grocery store or traveling to the beach, my mom and a random deaf person know each other because their brother’s cousin went to a School for the Deaf with her or something unpredictable. Without fail, it always brings a smile to my face to see the how small the deaf world is.

Luckily, my hometown, Waco, Texas, has a great, full deaf population. From when I was a newborn, my mother raised me in a world where Deaf Club was like Sunday morning church. We never missed a gathering and I was more than okay with that. I grew up with some of my life long CODA friends at Deaf Club and we developed a bond that only CODAs will understand. Every elderly deaf couple at Deaf Club felt like another set of grandparents that either always had some sort of homemade craft or homemade desserts for me and they always seemed amazed at how big I was getting even though I saw them last week. A person’s name is special because it is yours but most likely, you share that name with thousands of other people on this earth. There is nothing like having a “sign name” which is a special sign that is used to uniquely identify a person. It is a handcrafted, well thought out, and a sentimental sign that is yours and just yours. Your
deaf community agrees on the sign name for a person and it almost feels like your mark accepting you into their pack.

The fact that my mother is a single mom makes our relationship more intimate, but having a deaf mom is something positively special. Always having each other’s upmost attention when signing creates link that is not the same as other families who have conversations in different rooms by yelling. Her bedtime stories and lullabies had so much imagery when her hands would dance and paint me vivid pictures. I am never bothered by quiet places or closed captions on the T.V. because I feel a sense of hominess with my mother.

Those are just small snippets of my favorite things in life that a disability gave me. It is not sad or life ruining, it is beautiful, interactive, and loud. I cannot imagine my life without the beauty of the deaf culture. The absence would leave a large piece of myself missing and I would feel an emptiness. As a result of this, I want to spend the rest of my life surrounding myself with and sharing the deaf culture. Teaching others that being deaf is so much more than silence and a limiting disability, it is a gateway to a whole new outlook on life. There are too many third world countries where deaf children are born and their parents do not realize there is a way to communicate with their child. The child is usually left to grow up neglected and uneducated. This is where I want to come in and provide these children with the beautiful language I love and the education they deserve by majoring in Bible ministry and Social work, to one-day lead to serving international, underprivileged deaf children and their families.