

Every month, you'll meet teens whose unique experiences might make them seem like they're from a different world—but in reality, you'll find that they're just like you.

What makes you different? Go online and let us know!



My dog, Andrew, helps me pick out what to cook from my binder full of recipes.



Dessert is served!
Ever since my dad had a stroke, I try to come up with healthy recipes he'll actually like.

LAURA PEDRICK/GETTY IMAGES (GEORGIA CATANESE), PHOTOS OF YOUNG GEORGIA AND HER MOTHER COURTESY OF JOE CATANESE

Different
Like You

Georgia Was Born Deaf



One of my
specialties,
chicken and
veggie stirfry

But she didn't let that—or her mom's death—dampen her dreams of becoming a star chef.

**By Georgia Catanese
as told to Ramin Ganeshram**

By the time I was 3 months old, my parents knew that I wasn't like other kids. I looked the same and did the same baby things, but I was born **profoundly** deaf. However, I could have a procedure called cochlear-implant surgery where a surgeon would put small electronic devices inside my ear canals. I was so little that the idea of surgery was pretty scary for my parents, but they knew it was the only way for me to be able to hear. That first implant was just the beginning of my journey to the hearing world.

When I was 12, I

received the newest, best cochlear implants on the market. Now, I hear sounds much more clearly, including sounds I had never noticed before: the humming from my computer,

the house air-conditioner turning on, and airplanes and helicopters flying by.

I still don't always hear what my friends are talking about, or understand some jokes. I usually listen to our



favorite songs with the song lyrics in hand and practice until I can sing along with my friends. I also watch my favorite TV shows and movies at home with the closed caption turned on.

To tell you the truth, at times being able to turn my implants off has its advantages. I can shut them off to concentrate on my homework, or when I'm reading a book or trying to fall asleep. Sometimes I even shut them off if my dad is mad at me,

so I don't hear him yelling!

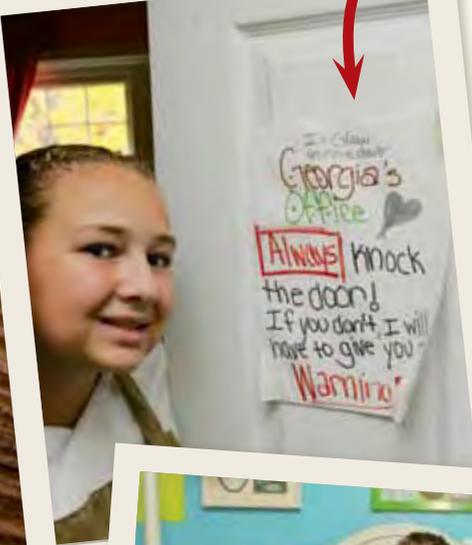
Throughout everything, my mom was my biggest **advocate**. She got me involved in so many activities that I never felt out of place. She was also my first cooking teacher. When I was little, she'd let me pour batter into a pan or a bowl. She taught me to bread chicken cutlets and make homemade mashed potatoes, my dad's favorite food. When I was 9, our special mother-daughter

cooking time came to an end, because my mom started to get sick. The doctors finally figured out what was wrong with her: She had stomach cancer. She passed away a month before my 10th birthday.

I did the only thing I could to take my mind off the pain of losing my mom: I focused on my recipes and cooking the dishes we made together. Cooking became my way of keeping memories of my mom alive. But the hard times weren't going to end for my family anytime soon. Within a couple of months of losing my mom, my dad had a severe stroke that left him unable to use his left side.

*Confession:
Sometimes I dance
alone in here.*

*I ♡ soccer so much,
I play on two teams!*



This is my "me" time.



I love the all-sister band "Cimorelli"



Suddenly, my cooking wasn't just for fun anymore. I decided to take over cooking for my dad. I became obsessed with making the kind of healthy dishes that could keep him well and prevent another stroke.

Now I'm totally focused on one day becoming a professional cook. I set up a Facebook page to share my recipes and had my own business cards made that say "Teen Chef G." I had

a blast handing them out at a fund-raiser for a local hospital last year, where I got to meet a bunch of celebrity chefs. I have all my recipes in binders, organized with color-coding—which I know will come in handy when I become the youngest chef on the Food Network! Having a goal keeps me focused and empowered. When I'm in the kitchen, I realize that there's nothing I can't do and nothing I can't get through.

3

Things Georgia Wants You to Know

1 ASK ME ALREADY! It really bugs me when people beat around the bush. I'd rather just tell you about my cochlear implants than have you stare and whisper.

2 BE COMPASSIONATE. It's hard not having my mom anymore, and it can feel bad when other kids assume that I have a "typical" family. There are a lot of different types of families out there.

3 DREAM BIG. If you are passionate about something, believe you can do it as well as any adult!

Visit my "Teen Chef G" Facebook page for recipes you can try!



My favorite TV show is Glee. I download lots of their songs to my iPhone!

