



Into the life of RJ

Deaf athlete shares his story as a deaf student at East

Photo/V. Seaman

Story/ T. McPhee

Walking onto the baseball field for your game, you hear seeds crunch as players chew on them, cleats scrape on the concrete dugout floor, the ball clash with the bat. During the game you turn around and you hear another player yelling to throw the ball home to get the runner out but what would you do if you could not hear your teammate yelling at you to do so? It is silent and for one player the only sound he is able to hear is pure silence. This is sophomore RJ Channon, a deaf student at here at East ready to tell his story growing up deaf.

“My parents learned sign language to help me communicate with them and so they can communicate with me and my sister,” RJ said.

RJ has a very special family setting because he is not the only deaf person in his family. For most families there usually is only one deaf individual but his family is very unique. Before RJ his parents had his sister who is also deaf. They had to adjust to having half of their household being deaf by learning sign language to be able to talk to their kids. At East

“I’m happy that RJ has the confidence and the motivation to attempt different avenues of communication,” Teacher

of the Deaf Katy Faircloth said .

The only way to be able to communicate with him is to learn sign language which is

“ His personality makes him stand out for being who he is ”

very important because RJ’s friends are mostly hearing students. His friends are not the only people learning though. With such an interest in

talking, RJ is in the process of learning to talk, and being able to use his voice combined with some sign language to communicate with other students. Some cannot understand what he may be trying to say or may only get bits and pieces, but RJ has recently gotten hearing aids which give him some hearing but not enough. These hearing aids are furthering his progress in using his voice. This is important to him because he is so involved at East in school and sports. .

“After watching RJ playing baseball, I knew he had it in him and we are still proud of him giving a great performance especially from a deaf athlete,” his mother Michelle said.

RJ is involved with baseball and golf at East and excels in both sports. Since he is not able to hear, it is key for him to communicate with his interpreter that comes to games and practice with him. Growing up his dad also made it very possible by coaching him in baseball through little league and tournament as he has grew up. RJ is also well known on the golf team. Golf is a quiet sport which gives him a one up on the sport and he is able to focus very well.

“I am proud to be a deaf student at east and I am glad of how welcoming everyone is,” RJ said.