



How Early Intervention Opened a World of Sound for Zay-Lee Adams

BY NOTHANDO MTHEMBU  @GOODTHINGS GUY MARCH 3, 2026



Photo Credit: Supplied by Lynn Cloete from the Carel Du Toit Centre

A hearing loss diagnosis for Zay-Lee Adams at just five months became the first step towards speech, sound and a beautiful bond with her parents.

Cape Town, South Africa (03 March 2026) – Today marks World Hearing Day, and at the **Carel du Toit Centre**, this day is about so much more than just awareness. It is a celebration of its inspiring learners (and their families) who are the epitome of possibility, perseverance and the power of early intervention.

Take Zay-Lee Adams as a shining example. Born with a permanent hearing loss in both ears, Zay-Lee's journey began at just three months old. During a routine clinic follow-up, it was discovered she wasn't responding to sound. After being referred to Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, she received a formal diagnosis at five months and was fitted with her first hearing aids just one month later.

From that point forward, her path toward sound and speech truly began.

Her mother, Shihaam, recalls the diagnosis as shocking yet clarifying. With both parents experiencing hearing loss themselves and a family history of hearing loss on her father Zane's side, the news soon turned into determination.



Photo Credit: Supplied by Lynn Cloete from the Carel Du Toit Centre

Zane communicates using both Sign Language and spoken language, while Shihaam uses Sign Language as her primary mode of communication.

Initially, communication presented challenges. After receiving her hearing aids, Zay-Lee was referred to the Carel du Toit CHAT (Children Hear and Talk) Centre – a partner organisation that provides specialised early intervention support to families of children with hearing loss.

Through structured guidance, practical strategies and unwavering encouragement, the family learned how to turn everyday interactions into powerful language-building opportunities.

As Zay-Lee developed spoken language, she naturally gravitated toward communicating verbally, often relying on her father to interpret between herself and her mother. Though this created an emotional barrier between mother and daughter, Shihaam remained steadfast. Through ongoing sessions and family-centred support, that barrier was gradually dismantled.

Today, at five years old, Zay-Lee confidently communicates using both spoken language and Sign Language. She now shares conversations directly with her mother, no interpreter needed. What once felt like distance has transformed into connection!

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“She is my gift from God,” says Shihaam.

“Without the support we received, I do not believe Zay-Lee would have reached the level of spoken language she has today.”



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This young girl's inspiring journey best captures the life-changing work the Carel du Toit Centre does. It restores hope, fosters communication, empowers and strengthens families.

Every child at the Centre has a hearing loss or is deaf. Through early identification, consistent use of hearing technology and the Learning and Spoken Language approach, these children are taught to listen and speak.

For families, the moment a baby hears their mother's voice for the first time, a bird singing or even the sound of a passing car, is nothing short of a miracle.

World Hearing Day serves as a global reminder of the importance of early detection and intervention in hearing loss. At Carel du Toit Centre, it is also a celebration of resilience, partnership and the extraordinary journeys that begin with a single sound.

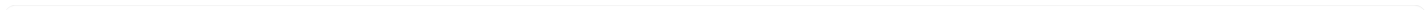
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