

Clarke Alum Torin: Being a Mentor



We spoke with seven individuals as part of our [Power of Representation series](#) about what it means to see deaf and hard of hearing experiences in popular culture. In addition to reading the series in Clarke Speaks, join the conversation on social media with [#LSLRepresentationMatters](#).



Torin Early, Clarke alum and college student.

As a young child, Clarke alum Torin fell critically ill with Kawasaki disease, suffering total bilateral sensorineural hearing loss as a result. Once he'd recovered, Torin and his twin brother Tevin, who has typical hearing, attended Clarke's Inclusive Preschool Program, where preschoolers who are deaf or hard of hearing learn alongside their peers with typical hearing.

"[Torin's] come a long way and it all started with Clarke," says his mother, Kimberley. "Probably one of the best decisions I made was to send Torin to Clarke."

The brothers now both attend the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where Tevin studies food science and is a member of the

track team, and Torin is working on designing his own major and also landscapes locally.

We connected with Torin to learn more about his studies and his experience seeing representation of people who are deaf or hard of hearing in pop culture.

"When I was growing up, I didn't see any meaningful representation of deaf people. Maybe I heard it mentioned as a joke in a TV show or in various lyrics in songs but never anything I specifically related to. Unfortunately, I haven't seen a shift in this representation over time. While growing up there were no role models or mentors that were deaf. I had no one like me that I was able to look up to and learn from. I try to be a mentor to other deaf and hard of hearing people I come in contact with because I know it hasn't always been easy."

"I don't know anyone in my field of interest who is deaf; I haven't done much research on that. I also haven't seen any successful adults with hearing loss represented in pop culture. I would say representation is important because it shows all the deaf and hard of hearing kids out there that it gets better. It shows them they can achieve their goals and live a life just as good as their peers if not better."

Torin continues to excel academically and hopes to enroll in a competitive master's program once he's earned his bachelor's degree.

“So far my studies at UMass Amherst have been going well. I feel I've learned many valuable lessons both in and out of the classroom that have helped me become more successful in my own life. I'm currently enrolled in a bachelor's degree with individual concentration (BDIC) which means I'll be selecting all of my own courses and essentially be creating my own major. My goal is to select classes that will most benefit me in preparing to apply to the neuroscience and behavior master's program at UMass.”