

# New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight



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## Carlsbad's Walker is Ready to Face the Field

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Kaitlyn Walker, a sophomore at Carlsbad High School, is currently in her second year on the Cavegirls' golf team and the first year on varsity. She picked up a club in second grade, learning the game from her grandfather, but along the way, Walker has overcome a severe hearing problem that at times made school and life difficult.

"I learned how to play golf from my grandfather. Golf has always been special to me because I was able to spend time with him and those memories are something I will never forget."

Although golf has been an outlet for Walker over the years, it was early in life that she faced a much bigger challenge than a left-to-right 40-foot putt. In elementary school, Walker took the standard hearing test that most kids her age take but multiple attempts at the test failed, which in turn made school hard for her.

"In preschool, I failed my first hearing test. Not being able to hear made school extremely difficult. Reading and spelling were probably the hardest things for me because I couldn't hear the phonics or the words, which in turn made it hard to sound words out."

At five years old, Walker began to learn sign language from her mother, who had taken classes in college. Her grandmother learned sign language as well.

"My mom taught me sign language at 5-years-old. It was really my only way of communicating with her and my grandmother."

In fifth grade, Walker was fitted with hearing aids that allowed her to hear and, although the hearing wasn't an issue anymore, Walker says it was tough at first.

"When I first put the hearing aids on, it was amazing. I could finally hear but it was a huge shock. Things I didn't know made sounds, I could finally hear. I was a little behind because I had to retrain myself to speak with the correct phonics. It took some time but I eventually pulled through."

The entire experience taught Walker that she could overcome any obstacle in her way and she says that she would never have made it through without her family's support.

"Even though I have hearing issues, I know that I can do anything I want. I think this whole experience has made me a stronger person. My family's support really got me through the difficult times, especially my mom. She is my inspiration. She never gave up and taught me how to meet a challenge head on."



This year, Walker hopes to make the state golf tournament in May and says it would be a huge accomplishment.

“To make the state golf tournament is a big deal to me. I have put in so many hours of practice. I want to experience the state tournament and play against the best golfers in the state. I know I have a lot of work to do still but I’m ready for the challenge.”

Walker carries a 3.75 GPA and hopes to one day play golf collegiately. She also wants to be become a teacher and work with kids.

“My ultimate goal is to play college golf but I know it will take practice, practice, practice. I love working with kids and to follow in my mom’s footsteps and become a teacher is the goal.”