

# Loud Shirt Day gives the gift of hearing

Cohuna resident Christine Travena has raised a record amount of money for her efforts on Loud Shirt Day.

The annual fundraiser, which took place on October 21, raises funds to give the gift of sound and speech to deaf children.

Christine and the Cohuna community raised \$3630, more than anyone else in Victoria, for the event which was initiated by First Voice, a national advocacy body for sound and speech member organisations in Australia and New Zealand.

"The fundraising started with a family barbecue . . . and in the end we had \$5000 worth of prizes donated which we could raffle off to family and friends," Christine said.

"Offices with 500 people in them didn't even raise that much."

Christine had special motivation for this year's fundraiser.

Her daughter, Holly, was diagnosed as being severely hearing impaired in March, just before her second birthday.

In June, Holly became one of the youngest children to have bilateral cochlea implants fitted simultaneously.

"She can't hear anything lower than 120 decibel, which is equivalent to not being able to hear a jet plane taking off next to her," Christine said.

"But, with the implants, she can even hear you whisper."

Taralye, a First Voice oral language centre for

deaf children in Victoria, has helped Holly learn to use her implants and provided support and assistance through their early intervention program.

Taralye development manager Kevin Gray said there was an important purpose for the money raised from this year's Loud Shirt Day.

"We need to add an additional speech pathologist to the early intervention centre. We need to teach the kids how to use the cochlea implant," he said.

To teach Holly how to listen and speak by the age of five, Christine must take her daughter to regular speech pathology and see a Taralye teacher from Bendigo every fortnight.

The treatment is not cheap, Mr Gray said.

"It costs about \$13,000 a year for the full treatment for the child to be able to speak by age five," he said.

With one Australian child identified as being hearing impaired every day, any money raised through fundraisers like Loud Shirt Day is greatly appreciated.

That is why Christine will be doing it all again next year, with the help of the Cohuna community.

"The whole community has got behind Holly and it's been just fantastic," she said.

"We've already got donations flying in for next year."

— Emma Krstic



**A new world:** Travena has been given the gift of hearing thanks to bilateral cochlea implants

**Happy days:** Christine and Ian Travena with their children Holly and Jack.