

January 3, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to inform parents of children with microtia (absence or deformity of the ear) that reconstructive surgery, although many times presented as the only viable option, is not the best solution. I believe an ear prosthesis is the better alternative. Let me tell you of our experience.

My son Patrick was born with a condition called microtia. We were told that when he was old enough (approximately age 6 or 7), his ear could be surgically reconstructed by taking rib cartilage and forming an outer ear. We were not aware of other options, nor were we presented with other options.

At the age of 7, Patrick underwent his first of two extensive reconstructive surgeries, which involved removing rib cartilage, forming an ear, and also taking a skin graft. The healing process for this was quite lengthy, and Patrick did not look forward to another procedure. Nine months later, he had another skin graft and further work on his ear to try to make it look more normal.

Unfortunately, although he had more of an ear than when he was born, it still was not a normal-looking ear and could not even hold a pair of glasses. We were disappointed with the outcome. Patrick was tired of the questions from his peers about his ear. We had come to realize that his left ear would never look like his normal right one but were unsure what we could do until we read an article in *Reader's Digest* about Robert Barron, who had made prosthetic ears for a teenage boy. We were thrilled about the opportunity of being able to give Patrick a normal-looking ear.

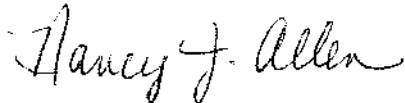
We contacted Mr. Barron and within a few months he was able to begin the process of fabricating an ear for Patrick. In November of 2004, Patrick was excited to receive his ear prosthesis and has been showing it off to everyone he knows. Only under close scrutiny can one detect that he has a prosthesis.

We are so happy with the prosthetic ear. Had we known about this option before Patrick had surgery and given the fact that ear reconstructive surgery did not yield the desired results, we would have skipped the surgery and gone with just the prosthesis.

Robert Barron does wonderful work, and his work continues to improve the lives of so many people. Patrick, now 11, goes through his daily activities without being identified as the "boy with one ear". I feel that parents of children with microtia should be made

aware that ear reconstructive surgery will produce less than the desired result. An ear prosthesis will save the child from so much pain and disappointment. Every child wants to look "normal" in order to fit in, and Bob Barron can do so much to enhance the lives of these children with the prosthetics that he creates. I hope this message will reach those parents who are contemplating reconstructive ear surgery for their child. With Bob Barron's help, they can save their child from so much pain and disappointment and give their child the look he/she desires.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy J. Allen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Nancy J. Allen