**ESL 10104: The Amazing Life of Helen Keller**

Welcome to spotlight I’m Liz Waid

And I’m Colleen Lauver

Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting it is easier for people to understand no matter where in the world they live

“Once I knew only darkness and stillness. My life was without past or future. But a little word from the fingers of another person fell into my empty hand. And then my heart suddenly opened to the wonder of living.”

Helen Adams Keller wrote these hopeful words. Her childhood was dark and silent. Yet she became an encouraging writer and teacher for many people today’s Spotlight is on the writer and educator Helen Keller.

Helen Keller was born in 1880 in the United States. She was a healthy baby. But Helen became very sick when she was one-and-a-half years old. No one knew what kind of sickness she had. Now experts think she may have had scarlet fever or meningitis. Her sickness was very serious her family believed that Helen was going to die.

Helen did not die. She seemed to recover from her Sickness. Her family was very happy but all was not well. Helens mother saw that Helens behavior had changed. Helen did not react to noise. She did not react to movement either. When Helen’s mother placed her hand in front of Helen’s eyes, Helen did not move. She could not see. She could not hear. The sickness had left Helen blind and deaf.

Life for Helen and her family was difficult. Helen became a troublesome child. She smashed things in the house she was angry, she was intelligent, but she had no way to communicate. By the time she was 6 years old, Helens family needed a new way to help her. They traveled to an Institute for

the blind. Doctors there said that Helen would never see or hear again, but the director of the Institute told them not to lose hope. He said that Helen could learn. She only needed a teacher.

This teacher was Anne Sullivan. Anne was a 20-year-old student at the Institute for the blind. Anne had lost most of her eyesight at the age of five. At the Institute for the blind, she had operations on her eyes, then she could see better and went to live with the Keller family as Helen’s teacher

Later Helen wrote: “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.”

Anne changed Helen’s life. She showed Helen love and support. Helen began to trust Anne. Soon Helen’s behavior improved. Anne also began to teach Helen words and used her finger to write the letters of words on Helen’s hand. Helen repeated the finger movements but she did not understand the meaning of the letters and words. Then a small event

changed Helen forever. One day Helen and Anne were walking outside they passed a water well. Anne took Helens hands on one hand she wrote the letters w a t e r on the other hand. She poured cool water, suddenly Helen understood the meaning of the word “water”. She now understood the

symbols of language. After this Helen wanted to know more and more and continued to teach her words and their meanings. Soon Anne taught Helen to read and write. Helen did this through her

sense of touch. People were very surprised that Helen could read, write and communicate. This was not common for blind people in the 1800s but Helen did not ever give up. She wrote:

“When we do the best we can, we never know what miracle is made in our life, or in the life of another.”

In 1900, Helen went to Radcliffe College in England. Helen became the first deaf and blind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree at college. Helen also began to write about her life. Helen wrote many books. Some of the books were about her life, other books were about her Christian faith. Much of her writing was political. Helen Keller saw that many blind people lived in poor

Conditions. Blind people did not get a good education, but Helen showed that it is possible for blind people to live happy, productive lives. She wrote:

“The public must learn that the blind man has a mind that can be educated. He has a hand that can be trained. He has dreams that are right for him to work towards.”

Helen was also very interested in justice for blind people in other countries. She traveled to 40 countries around the world. She gave speeches and brought hope to many people. The communities that Helen Keller visited increased their efforts for blind people.

Helen did not only work for justice for blind people, she did not like injustice of any kind. she worked for social rights women’s rights and for peace. She believed that God created all people equal. She thought that all people had equal rights to a good life. She said:

“The world is full of suffering, but it is also full of overcoming suffering. I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something.”

Helen Keller kept writing and giving speeches until she was an old woman. She won many awards and knew many famous people. But after she turned 80, Helen had some health problems. She moved back to her home and lived simply

Helen Keller died peacefully at the age of 88 her life brought hope and courage to millions of people and she continues to encourage people all around the world with wise words such as these:

“True happiness is not found through helping yourself, but through faithfulness to a good purpose. The best and most beautiful things in life cannot be seen or touched. They are felt in the heart.”