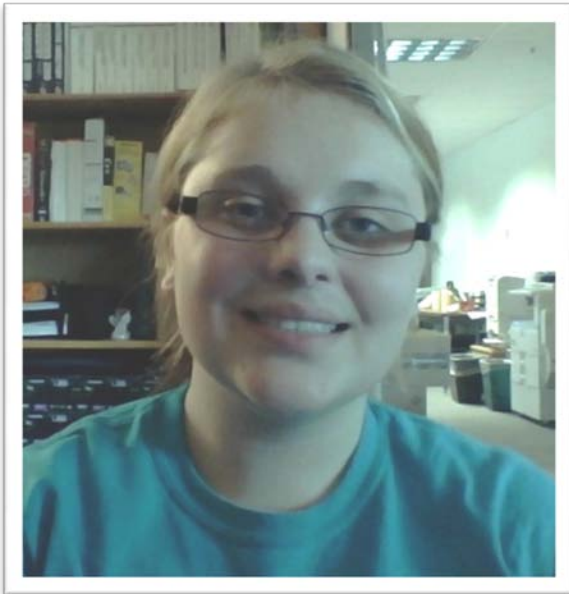


Hello! My name is Ayla Summerlin and I am a freshman at Northeastern State University. I was born with a cleft lip. I was lucky that my palate was intact. During my childhood I still did not fit in completely.

When I was a child I got a lot of questions. In many of my conversations questions appeared like "How did you get that scar?" and "What happened to your lip?" I would always answer them as nicely as I could. Sometimes I would keep it short and just say I have a cleft lip. After a while it got extremely annoying, but I knew that the other kids didn't understand, so I had to be patient.



I did get made fun of during elementary school. I have been called scar face. I used to come home crying and saying that I didn't have any friends. I joined Tae-Kwon-Do during my 4th grade year. I stayed in Tae-Kwon-Do until the end of my 5th grade year, because I had to move to Oklahoma. I knew people there from visiting during the summer, so most of the people knew about my cleft. I was never really made fun of after that.

Having a cleft taught me not to judge others. I know how it is to be different. Different is not always bad. It has inspired me. I am now a freshman in college and joyous as ever. I am looking at being a speech pathologist to help kids with birth defects like cleft lip/palates. I wouldn't be the person I am today without my cleft.