Claire Marshall is a sophomore at the University of Oregon. In past years she has also been a munchkin, a witch, a drug addict and a ghost, among other things. Claire Marshall is an actress. In the last nine years, she has been a part of over thirty productions, some at her high school but most with different community theatres around Eugene. She has performed for audiences of more than two hundred people. However Claire was not always so confident on stage or even in her everyday life.

As a kid, Claire describes herself as being incredibly awkward. She was very shy and as a result experienced many difficulties making friends and participating in team sports, as many other kids her age did. Her shyness also made it hard to get her to go to school. “I just wasn’t in a good place,” says Claire.

She was in fifth grade when her mother saw the ad in the corner of a local newspaper, “Auditions for Seussical the Musical,” it read. The show was being put on by Actors Cabaret of Eugene and auditions just happened to be that weekend. Thinking it would be good for Claire, her mother tried to convince her to audition. Claire agreed to do it only if she would too. Both mother and daughter were cast as Whos from Whoville. “It was the most wonderful show,” says Claire, “everyone just became one big family.”

About halfway through the rehearsal process, Claire was asked to participate in ACE’s next show, The Wizard of Oz. Thirty shows later and Claire has changed drastically from a shy and awkward kid into a confident performer.

“At first it was nerve racking but it’s so rewarding. Eventually you get to the point where, yes it’s the character doing these crazy things but it’s also you. And you’re just so proud.” Claire has been able to see the changes in herself off stage as well as on stage. Tasks such as taking a test or interviewing for a job have become much easier for her. Interacting with strangers and things she struggled with as a result of her shyness, are no longer issues. For Claire, it is difficult to imagine her life without theatre. “I’d like to think, even without Seussical, I would have found my way to it somehow.” She notes, “It’s been such an important part of growing up.”