Los Angeles developer Rick Caruso recalls the emotional moment last year after USC doctors inserted a new hearing device into his daughter’s ear canal. The teenager, who had struggled with mild to moderate hearing loss since birth, suddenly started crying because of the clarity of the sound around her.

Gianna Caruso, now 15, had relied on external hearing aids most of her life and had learned to read lips. With the new internal device, known as a Lyric hearing aid, she heard subtle sounds such as water gushing in a fountain or the chirp of a distant bird, her father said.

That experience influenced him and his wife, Tina, to donate $25 million to the department at USC’s Keck School of Medicine that treats ear, nose, throat, head and neck problems and a related clinic that aids children with hearing loss. The gift is being announced Thursday.

“We want to be able to give more kids an opportunity for a very full and rich life and to minimize the struggles that come with hearing loss,” said Rick Caruso, who is the chief executive of the firm that developed the Grove in Los Angeles and the Americana at Brand in Glendale, and that is working on a new luxury resort to replace the former Miramar Hotel in Montecito.

Caruso is a USC alumnus and has been on the school’s board of trustees since 2007. He previously gave the university $10 million, including the lead gift to build the church and center for Catholic students that opened in 2012. Two of his sons have graduated from USC, a third attends there now and his daughter, Gianna, hopes to become a Trojan too, he said.

The Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery treats cancer, thyroid disorders, facial paralysis, hearing loss and other health problems. The affiliated Center for Childhood Communication treats more than 5,000 children a year with cochlear implants, speech therapy and other assistance for hearing loss. Both the department and the clinic will be named after the Carusos.

Rick and Tina Caruso are giving $25 million to USC’s medical school for research into hearing-loss treatment. Courtesy of the Caruso family.
Southern California property developer Rick Caruso and his wife, Tina, have donated $25 million to programs at the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine that help children with hearing loss, the Los Angeles Times reports.

The gift, announced Thursday, will support the medical school’s department for ear, nose, throat, head, and neck problems and an affiliated clinic for children with hearing problems.

Mr. Caruso, whose company has built several Los Angeles shopping and entertainment complexes, is a USC alumnus and has served since 2007 as a university trustee. The Carusos’ 15-year-old daughter, who had struggled with hearing loss since birth, was fitted by USC doctors last year with an internal ear device that radically improved her hearing clarity.

Los Angeles developer Rick J. Caruso and his wife, Tina, have donated $25 million to the University of Southern California to go towards research of diseases of the ear, nose and throat and treatment for children with hearing loss.

The Caruso’s gift will endow and name the USC Tina and Rick Caruso Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, one of the nation’s largest and most highly ranked for research and treatment of diseases of the ear, nose and throat. The gift also names and endows the department’s affiliated treatment center for young children with severe hearing loss, the USC Caruso Family Center for Childhood Communication.

The department serves patients facing a range of conditions affecting the head and neck, such as cancer, thyroid disease, facial paralysis, chronic sinusitis and tumors of the cranial base, while the family center’s technologies and services allow children to experience sounds — from their parents’ voices to music, laughter and nature — often for the very first time.

Rick Caruso, the chief executive of Caruso Affiliated, whose holdings include The Grove, The Americana at Brand and The Commons at Calabasas, said the donation carries great personal significance. The couple’s daughter, Gianna, was born with mild to moderate hearing loss, and a team of USC doctors last year provided her with a new highly sensitive hearing device that was inserted into her ear canal.