

The Power of Music

After being adopted, she was learning, growing, and thriving, but she had especially blossomed the last year of her life. She was quickly and accurately learning fiddle tunes by ear, and the last two waltzes she learned on her own, after listening to a them on a record. She recently graduated to some pretty tough tunes and she was really headed somewhere! Marsha recalls, "All who knew Neah, would nearly fall over when hearing her play. It was a pleasure to all who had the privilege of hearing her, because Sherry could get magic out of that girl!"

The last tune she was learning was Durang's Hornpipe, and she was determined to learn that tune. Sherry said, "we were working on the 'A' part at our last lesson, which was five days before she died. We had been playing past the normal length of our lesson time and I knew she was getting tired....but she hung in there and never checked out. I said 'let's do it one more time' and when she was about 2/3 of the way thru the A part she sped up REALLY fast, finished the part and yelled DONE! And we all burst out laughing, she so was so ready to stop. She texted me a video of her Durang's on Saturday (the day before she died) and I told her how great it was. I loved teaching her and knew that I was part of something much bigger than a weekly lesson. The mind blowing effort Marsha put in to helping Neah be the best she could be in all aspects of her life ended up changing my life too."



In 2018, Sherry nominated Neah for the Coda Bow need-based and merit-based program, *25 Bows for 25 Kids*. Neah was one of the winners, and she was awarded a bow with her name engraved on it. Here is an excerpt from the application: "Even with her physical challenges and delayed communication, Neah is one of my happiest and most dedicated students. Now, rarely is it an effort for her to look at me, and she is more comfortable trying to talk, although it is still a struggle for her. She is fortunate to have a committed support system and home practice helper in her mom, Marsha, on piano. Sometimes Neah smiles so big when she is playing, or she starts to laugh so hard out of pure joy, that we have to stop playing because we are all laughing so hard! In two and a half years of private lessons, to say her progress as a musician and a more confident young woman is amazing, is an understatement. She practices everyday and absolutely loves her instrument, and her instrument is her voice. Her progress is in small, but consistent steps. Now, in our lessons, she will often name a tune she wants to play, and play it beautifully! She is developing good intonation, learning vibrato, and learning to add variations to her tunes. Neah has entered quite a few fiddle contests here in Texas, and she won a first place title at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo Fiddle Contest in 2018. Neah is small for her age, and she just recently moved up to a 7/8 size. My husband Joey is a luthier and he is keeping an eye out for a great quality, 'small' full size fiddle. Her hands are small, but her heart and smile are big enough to light up the room, and it would be wonderful to have a nice, full size bow to go along with it. In addition to having the best possible instrument and bow to match her advancing skills, I know that the boost from receiving a bow engraved with her name, and to be recognized for her hard work and dedication, would thrill her!" At the time of her death, Neah had memorized 40 - 50 fiddle tunes and she was accurately learning tunes on her own from recordings. She was also speaking in complex sentences. Playing the fiddle gave Neah a voice in this world, and she had much to say. Neah found her voice, and music gave it to her.



Neah with her Coda Bow