

Founder's Scholarship Winner Has Bright Future

Piano Santa Foundation supporters may remember Sara Beth Thomas' beautiful and original arrangement of "What Child Is This" from the Winter Recital last December. A natural composer, she has honored her undeniable devotion to the piano by working consistently for ten years to be a versatile pianist with a broad understanding of all aspects of music. We are very pleased to introduce Sara Beth as the Piano Santa Foundation's most recent Founder's Scholarship award recipient.

Sara Beth began taking piano lessons at age six. Just a few years later, she realized that she had an unstoppable passion for composing music. Now sixteen, she devotes as much time as possible to

the development of her musical talents. Her current piano teacher, Ms. Paula Watt, explains that during their first few years working together, Sara Beth progressed from Syllabus Level 3/4 through completion of Level 8 with glowing reviews. Ms. Watt describes the pace of this progress as "staggering."

In conscientious and joyful pursuit of a well-rounded musical education, Sara Beth not only studies the traditional piano repertoire of Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Contemporary pieces required for the Syllabus program (she is currently preparing for Level 9), but she also works with local jazz pianist and composer, Randy Porter, to learn improvisation and complex chords. On a typical day, Sara Beth currently practices about an hour of jazz in addition to 30-45 minutes of traditional piano repertoire.

Bright, friendly and enthusiastic, she describes herself as "very social." She enjoys spending time with her friends and is also involved with her church and youth group. She occasionally performs at Open Mic sessions on Friday nights at Solace & Fine Espresso (4655 SW Griffith Drive, Ste. 160, Beaverton, OR 97005). These Open Mic events are open to the public and we encourage our readers to check out a performance!

Currently a junior attending Cor Deo Christian



Sara Beth Thomas, 16, winner of the PSF 2015 Founder's Scholarship

Academy in Beaverton, Sara Beth also sings and plays the guitar and ukulele. Her future plans, in addition to completing Syllabus Levels 9 and 10, include recording some of her original compositions, participating in many upcoming competitions and recitals, and preparing for the college application process. She aspires to study piano and composition, and is considering Wheaton College in Illinois, among other schools.

It seems abundantly clear to everyone who encounters Sara Beth and her music that she is an extremely gifted and motivated young musician with a bright future ahead of her. We are so happy to include Sara Beth and her family on the Piano Santa Foundation roster,

and we look forward to watching and supporting her as she continues to develop her talent and pursue her passion.

To see a video of Sara Beth performing one of her original pieces, visit www.pianosanta.org.

New PSF Video!

PSF is pleased to announce the release of our first biographical video! We had been wanting to create something like this for years, and when the opportunity came up to work with Dan Sadowsky, we jumped at the chance.

Dan is a video producer and editor based in Portland, and knew our own Claudine Elzey from when they worked together at Mercy Corps. He's produced brand videos for several nonprofits, and his editing credits include "50 Feet From Syria," which was shortlisted for the 2016 Academy Award for Best Short Documentary and is now available on Netflix. You can read more about him and his work at http://storymind.productions.

Our deepest thanks to Dan, his all-volunteer crew, and to the PSF volunteers, Board Members, students and families who made this video possible.

You can view the video on our website at www.pianosanta.org or on our YouTube channel.



Teacher Bonnie Monk Kraxberger, with students from the First Step Keyboard Class at Beaver Acres

INTERVIEW: Bonnie Monk Kraxberger on the First Step Keyboard Program

In 2015, Beaver Acres Elementary in Beaverton became the seventh school to host the PSF First Step Keyboard Program, a free 10-week after-school course offering interested students the opportunity to learn the basics of piano.

We asked First Step instructor Bonnie Monk Kraxberger about her experience. Bonnie has been working with Piano Santa to present First Step classes for 3 years.

Question: What do you most enjoy about teaching First Step?

Answer: I enjoy teaching students who otherwise would not have the opportunity to play the piano. I appreciate that First Step sends me to elementary schools to reach out to these students.

Question: Why do you think it is important for young students to learn music?

Answer: Music as a general benefit to learning is indisputable. It activates both the left and right hemispheres [of the brain] simultaneously, calms the body, and develops artistry and analytical skills. Music intrinsically is important for young students because it is their constant companion in daily life through iPods, radio, and TV. *Question: Anything else you'd like*

to add?

Answer: The SHINE coordinator at Beaver Acres has been instrumental in making the First Step program work at this site. Not only does Mr. Matt communicate school scheduling in advance, he frequently listens in to the students and makes the time for them to play for him as they are learning.

Sandra [PSF Executive Director] has been phenomenal in coordinating the First Step program with me. I loved the mission of the program from the first time she told me about it and was determined to become part of it. When there are difficulties in the term, such as difficult students or too many missed days of school, I remember that I'm here to bring music to children who don't have the chance to learn piano on their own, and it brings me great joy.

Bonnie Monk Kraxberger has been teaching music since 2006. She has a Bachelor's of Music degree from Willamette University and is an active board member of the Portland Alumni



PSF Program Basics

PSF was created in 1994 to provide music education opportunities for children, particularly in underserved populations, in the Portland metropolitan area. The three main focuses of our programming are

(1) Scholarships: placing pianos in students' homes,

(2) First Step and Second Step Keyboard Programs: offering group piano lessons to elementary-aged children, and

(3) **Community Placement Grants:** placing pianos with deserving community organizations.

In support of these programs, we provide in-home piano tunings and maintenance, offer educational opportunities, and sponsor student recitals throughout the year. Please see our website for information.

PSF Board & Staff

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The Piano Santa Foundation

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Chapter of Mu Phi Epsilon. She offers both private and group lessons for a variety of instruments in her Beaverton studio, Monk Music Lessons. www.monkmusiclessons.com.

Volunteer Spotlight: Davina Doby

When her son Sam won the PSF Grand Scholarship Competition, Davina Doby was "bowled over." She had heard about Piano Santa from Sam's piano teacher, Patricia Scordato, and had been impressed with the organization's mission and history. "He was twelve years old, and he couldn't achieve the big, rich sound wanted when playing Beethoven on our old spinet piano," Davina remembers. "We had tried to get a



PSF Volunteer Davina Doby

grand piano for years, but it just wasn't in our financial picture."

When Sam graduated from Piano Santa, Davina began volunteering with PSF's Scholarship Committee. That is the group that vets applications from prospective students and from community organizations interested in getting a PSF piano on site. "I like it because we get to talk with the kids." On the Scholarship Committee, volunteers get to "have a direct impact on their lives." Davina and the rest of the committee also help run the organization's Grand Scholarship competitions every year.

"I'm very grateful for the organization, and delighted to be a part of it."

Now that she has seen Piano Santa from a few perspectives, she remains impressed with the organization, particularly its responsiveness. "They address every request for help as appropriately and respectfully as possible. And they maximize resources so they can impact the most kids."

Sam has continued his fantastic progress in music: he recently performed the MacDowell Piano Concerto with the Jewish Community Orchestra. And Davina expects to stay involved with Piano Santa, saying "I love that future Mozarts and

Chopins won't be denied the opportunity to be who they're supposed to be!"



Rhythm flowing notes, That leap around pianos, Dance and sing like stars

 Kira, PSF student and winner of the 2016
PSF Haiku Contest

GRACE NOTES Our heartfelt thanks go to the following individuals, businesses, and foundations for their support of PSF programs, as well as to the many anonymous donors who have made generous contributions. Your support makes all the difference! If your name is missing from this list (and you wish to be added), please call our office, and we will be sure to make the correction in our next edition.

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Upcoming 2016 Events

Fall Showcase September 24, 2016, 10:30am Classic Pianos 3003 SE Milwaukie Ave. Holiday Recital December 3, 2016, 10:30am Classic Pianos 3003 SE Milwaukie Ave.