



Daydream believer

By **DEB GRAYSON**
Connection to West Omaha

The first song she learned to play on the piano was a tune called, "Dreams Come True" - and it was certainly a fitting one for this 17 year-old.

Rachel was born and raised in the South, but luckily she calls Omaha home now. Her early years were ones of tragic disappointment and abuse until fate stepped in in the form of foster care and her subsequent adoption at 8 years old.

Hoping to find a creative outlet for the anger and frustration their daughter harbored over the loss of her childhood, the family turned to music and piano lessons from Laurie Richards.

Richards teaches a unique form of piano lessons called Simply Music.

"The underlying premise of Simply Music is that everyone, without exception, is musical," Richards said.

Richards, a classically trained pianist and flutist and a former teacher of traditional piano methods, said Simply Music "promises immediate results and it delivers."

Immediate, Richards said, could be as soon as the first month.

Lessons begin with a simplified arrangement of Beethoven's "Für Elise" and progresses to pop, contemporary, blues, jazz, classical and accompaniment.

Richards said her students range in age from 5 to 70. She teaches a 60-something woman who moonlights as a clown, as well as a young man who was frustrated and going nowhere with the traditional method of learning. Now, after only a couple of years with Richards, he is playing like a pro.

"There is always music in my house, even after the lessons have ended," Richards said. "My husband is learning to play and so are my three children."

Her children are 12, 7 and 5, and Richards said she is especially excited about her 12 year-old son's progress.

"He was born with Down Syndrome," she said. "And since reading music is kind of abstract to him, learning to play this way gives him the opportunity to express himself musically."

"Learning to play the Simply Music method gives everyone the opportunity to experience accomplishment and enjoyment from the beginning."

In just over a year of weekly lessons, Rachel has accomplished much. She is playing classical as well as jazz compositions.

She loves contemporary songs and she likes the oldies, too. She has even started putting together arrangements of

her own - her current favorite being a combination of "Night Storm" and "I'll Be There."

"She's doing great," said her dad, Jim. "We couldn't be prouder of her." At 17, Rachel isn't quite certain about future career aspirations, but does know it will be something in the creative field that involves artistry.

"But one thing I do know for sure," she said, "I will be playing piano the rest of my life."



Photo by Tony Miceli

Rachel plays piano for enjoyment and as a creative outlet.

**More information about
Simply Music can be found at:
www.omahapiano.com
or by contacting Laurie Richards at
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