

Reagan Larson

I remember when I first started playing in the Suzuki program and listening to the seniors play the Vivaldi double. The piece was so beautiful and exciting, and I dreamed of the day I might get to play it.



It is amazing to reflect on how much I've grown, now that I'm playing the piece today. I'm so thankful for this program that has influenced my playing so much. I will be attending Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota.

One of my favorite memories of Reagan Larson is a unique home book recital. She loves people and had a room full of friends eagerly waiting for the concert. Before each song, Reagan would talk about a friend and what she found special about them. Then she dedicated and played the piece to that person. This is an

example of an exceptional student who does the required work and then goes beyond to do extra creative effort. I expect Reagan will be successful at life and I wish her the Very Best! ~ Liz Benusis

CLASS OF 2018

BLACK HILLS SUZUKI SENIORS



Annie Schleusener

I'm going to Augustana to study Nursing, and I will continue playing my violin (without majoring) in college, and hopefully beyond. My favorite Suzuki memories are, of course, from strings camp! It always astounded me realizing I'd just played my violin for 6 hours per day for a whole week. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to be in the program since I was small, because the Rapid City Suzuki program gave me a substantial life head start.

One of Annie Schleusener's most endearing qualities is her complete honesty and positive outlook on life.

À I will really miss our conversations and her funny yet totally different way of viewing life. I remember discussing with her something to do with our Suzuki program and whether or not she had the time to attend and she said "of course I'll be there. Suzuki kids have the edge and if I miss this, I won't have that edge". She's completely right on that account. She has been a reliable Suzuki student since. She rarely misses anything our program has to offer even while balancing school, dance, children's choir and theatre. I'm sure I forgot an activity but her heart really lies in the arts. She is very excited to be attending Augustana in the fall on a violin scholarship and I'm thrilled as her teacher that she is going to continue to study her violin. She has been a great person to work with these past few years and I wish we had more to spend together! ~ Carol Knowles



Kaleb Wilkening

I will be attending UNL and major in Piano Performance. The Suzuki program has taught me how to become a better teacher and musical role model for younger students while also teaching me the importance in mastering "easier" pieces. Techniques that I developed and mastered in said pieces helped make learning more standard repertoire easier.

Kaleb Wilkening and I met at a middle school viola sectional at String Retreat. À He is one of those kids that stands out from a crowd and after a couple of classes with him, I realized this kid needs lessons. Working at Wilson Elementary, I discovered one of the 5th grade teachers there was his aunt and pretty soon, Kaleb was in my studio. He's a wonderful kid to teach. Quite often during lessons, Kaleb and I found ourselves talking about music history, theory, conducting and form and analysis. Things I had forgotten since getting my degrees were occasionally called upon to remember during his viola lessons. Kaleb not only enjoys playing music whether it be piano or viola but wants to get to the root of music which is a rare trait in a high school student. Kaleb has been a very busy musician in his high school career. Along with his 4 years of performing at high levels on his viola, Kaleb played piano for church, soloists at contests, musicals both high school and community theatre, all-state band and orchestra. He will be attending University of Nebraska Lincoln on a piano scholarship with a double major in piano performance and political science. ~ Carol Knowles



Ingrid Anderson

A member of the Black Hills Suzuki School since 5th grade, Ingrid's favorite Suzuki memory is listening to her friends and fellow Suzuki students perform each year at the Young Artist Competition. She is so grateful to these friends, and of course to her parents and teachers, for their constant support. Next fall Ingrid will be attending University of Colorado Boulder for violin performance and pre-medical studies.

I have had the distinct pleasure of getting to work with Ingrid and I am no doubt a better person and teacher for it. Ingrid has many accomplishments under her belt, from Young Artist winner, to concertmaster of both All State Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra, to participating in the Interlochen World Youth Symphony Orchestra. She also shines at school where she plays tennis. From the time I met her while she was in elementary school I picked up on the sheer amount of determination this young lady has. Nothing was going to get in her way of being the very best player she could be. While I assigned a small practice spot her first week of lessons, fully expecting her to work on only that, she returned the following week with the entire piece learned and was going on to the next one. I knew then that I wouldn't have to chunk material down into bite size pieces since she was a go getter from the start. Always on time with a look of "let's get this done right!" and a smile on her face- I know she will continue to lead in college and wherever she finds herself after that. Best wishes from all of us here- thank you for making our Suzuki community a better place to be!

~ Amanda Swartz



Jamie Linde

Since joining the Suzuki program when I was 4 years old, my life has completely revolved around music. For me, music is my greatest passion. Through this program, I have gained not only an amazing talent, but amazing life-long friends as well. My time in the Suzuki program is what has made me into the person that I am today. Through the skills I have learned over the last 14 years, I was able to receive a music scholarship to attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I owe my talent to the amazing teachers that have always been by my side; to me, the Suzuki school will always be my second family.

I first met Jamie in Twinkle Class where she quickly displayed her quiet competence as a student of the violin. As she progressed, I began to notice a very rare quality about Jamie in her innate understanding of musical phrasing. I have told her this and have written about it in college applications, but Jamie has that special something that cannot be taught. Her playing makes emotional sense! Her parents, Carrie and Tim, had a vision for their daughter and the fortitude to carry it through! Jamie has become an excellent violinist with many accomplishments and she also has developed an interest in composing and arranging, so we are all happily anticipating where those talents may take her. Jamie has been the most dedicated and loyal of Suzuki students who we have grown to count on to provide leadership and an example to younger students. I know she is making a wonderful decision to be music major in college and I can't wait to find out what great things will happen in Jamie's future. ~ Deb Knowles

Jamie has been the most dedicated string student I have had the pleasure to teach. She was first my orchestra student in Middle School and I could always rely on her to make a reality out of whatever silly musical idea popped into my brain. "Sure, Ms. Knowles, let's flash mob the school cafeteria today with Michael Jackson's Thriller! Or, let's send a veiled threat to the social studies department with renditions of the Godfather theme! "South has not been the same since she left! At Central High School, she has become the heart of the string program, leading her orchestra on tours and competition wins. In addition to her commitment to our public school program, she has also been a model Suzuki student, and an inspiration to those around her. Students get involved in music for many reasons but for Jamie I can honestly say she has the music in her very soul.

Jamie's absence will leave a great hole in our musical community, but because of her inspiring qualities, I know there will be someone to fill it. Keep playing from your heart, Jamie, and you will find your path. ~ Elizabeth Knowles

Brigit Blote

As a student in the Black Hills Suzuki Strings program for over fourteen years, I cannot begin to express how much Suzuki has impacted my life. The whole experience has been such a wondrous journey! Everything, from twinkle class, graduating to “overnight camper” status at Strings Camp, anticipating the All-State Orchestra results, and having the honor of soloing with the Black Hills Symphony, has all contributed to my deep love for music. Thanks to this program I have been able to make memories that will last a lifetime, and friends who will last even longer. The support and encouragement from my teachers to “reach for the stars” and “play from the heart” are those that have made me the musician and person that I am today. There is something so special about Suzuki, and I truly just feel so blessed to have been able to be a part of it all.



It has been my pleasure to work with Brigit Blote since she was an eighth grader. She is a delightful person and a diligent student, taking every teaching point in her stride and striving to build on the technique and playing skills she has worked hard to achieve. Brigit manages to fit viola very well into her hectic schedule of athletics and academics. Brigit is the 2018 winner of the Black Hills Symphony Young Artist competition and performed with the Symphony this past March. She is a four-year member of the South Dakota All-State Orchestra and All-State Honors String Orchestra. Brigit has participated in master classes through the Black Hills Suzuki School and has attended the Black Hills String Retreat since pre-school. She will be attending the University of South Dakota in the fall, majoring in medical biology. ~ Charlie Savot

I first met Brigit as a smiling little girl in Twinkle Class. From the beginning, she was a very good and cooperative student who happily listened to her teacher and progressed rapidly. Her Mom, Laura, can take lots of credit, too, since when I was rhapsodizing about how great she was sounding, Laura would remark, “Yes, but what about her bow hold?” It was when she made the decision to become a violist, however, that Brigit really began to show her true potential. With her own instrument and musical identity, she became a dedicated and excellent musician with a bright future. Brigit’s has had the strongest of finishes with both first chair viola in All-State Orchestra and Young Artist Competition winner. Brigit, never lose your sweet nature and leadership qualities and please cherish your musical gifts and accomplishments. You were a joy to teach, and I look forward to being a part of your life as you continue to fulfill your dreams. ~ Deb Knowles

Will Raymond

I joined the Suzuki Twinkle class when I was 3. I feel that the program has given me a well-tuned ear. My favorite memories are of skit night at Strings Camp. I’d like to thank Deb and Elizabeth for their exceptional teaching and perseverance! I will be attending the University of Colorado - Boulder in the fall.

Ah, Will. I will always remember the cute little boy with the devilish grin who joined our Twinkle Class fifteen years ago. Somewhat exasperated Mom, Julie, introduced us to her son. “This is Will. He’s three going on two!” Will was a bit of a challenge as a little guy, but we all persevered, and it soon became evident that Will had the intelligence and musical ability to become a fine violinist. He has made me proud by playing with great tone and vibrato, and wonderful intonation. Though Will has many other interests and talents, his high school musical accomplishments are impressive! Will, I know you understand this, but hug your Mom extra hard because her love of music and dedication to the Suzuki Method has really paid big dividends for you! Please keep playing and stay in touch with us as you embark on your very bright future. ~ Deb Knowles



Will came to me his freshman year and I know he sometimes struggled with how far he wanted to take his musical endeavors. Despite this, he always remained hardworking and committed to our program. His interests have been vast, including advanced classes, tennis, world travel and even soccer, but he still managed to make All State Orchestra all 4 years, and was a member of the 2018 Honors Orchestra. I am beyond excited to see where Will’s life journey takes him and I hope he looks back on his Suzuki family fondly. I know we will remember him that way. Happy travels Will! We will remember you! ~ Elizabeth Knowles