

Nantucket Book Festival Young Writer Award Finalists 2019

Second Runner Up

“Solfeggio”: 9th grade

Sarah Hanlon

Sometimes it feels like I will never be able to play a song by Beethoven or Bach, or never be as successful as they were; however, Diane Lehman has always told me otherwise. Diane Lehman is one of the most influential community members I know. Diane is a very knowledgeable, caring person. She is a pianist who plays at many community events, and has been my piano teacher for 4 years. Diane has taught me more than just how to play the piano. She has taught me what perseverance really is and that I shouldn't feel like it's not worth trying if I can not do something at first. Diane has shown me the true meaning of music and how it can reflect one's life.

When I started playing the piano with Diane four years ago, she introduced me to a new world of music. In the past, with other teachers, I was given music and it wasn't always something I wanted to play. Diane gives me the option to choose music I would like to play, and she finds a song that meets my requests, but also challenges me to learn new skills. At one of my lessons, I sat down in front of the piano and Diane asked me what I would like to do and what type of music I would like to play. My response to most of her questions was “I don't know. Something that sounds cool.” Diane took my vague response and picked out songs she knew I would like. She showed me songs from many different genres. It seemed like she read my mind because I wanted to play them all. I decided I loved one song written by Bach, “Solfeggio”, but thought I would never be able to play it. It was really fast and complicated and I felt like I was reading another language when I looked at it. Diane told me she had no doubt that I would be able to play the song in as little as a few weeks. After that class I went home and tried to pick apart the piece and figure out how to play it. Every time I played the song I hit a wrong note. I never got the right sound and I just wanted to stop playing it. I felt like I was never going to reach the end like I hoped I would. After a while I just stopped trying to play the song.

When I got to my lesson Diane asked how it went and I told her how much I struggled. I said, “I can't do it.”

She looked at me and said, “Yes you can.”

I saw such faith and confidence in her eyes, and at that moment, she reassured me I would be able to do it. I spent the next few lessons working on everything I tried to do at home. I came across many obstacles that made me want to quit. Everytime I wanted to quit I remembered that Diane said I could do it, so I kept trying. I kept trying different things to play the song correctly. Finally after a few weeks, I resolved all the problems I started with. The next week I went to my lesson and played the song for her. At the end, I turned around to look at her, and she said, “I will never play that song for you again, because you can play it better than I can.”

When Diane said this to me, she really made me realize what hard work and discipline can do. I realized there were many opportunities for me to quit, but because I didn't, I reached the goal I had set at the beginning. After my lesson I walked out the doors feeling ten feet taller and more confident than ever before. Diane showed me that music is more than just any old song. When someone writes a piece, they put all of their emotions and feelings into it, like Bach did in his song. You can tell by his song that he was very disciplined, and had a life full of music. When you play a song, you should love what you are doing, and since this song I have found a new love for music and the piano.

Diane has such a positive attitude and it rubs off on all of her students. She has given me the tools to learn how to overcome problems and live a more productive life. Because of her, I know if I keep on trying I will be able to reach my goals and become an overall better pianist.

Although I may not be Beethoven or Bach, Diane has taught me I can still make the same impact they did in my own life.