



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Fiddlers group takes all ages with a love of music

Founder plays through arthritis pain, teaches others

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Arthritis hasn't prevented Catherine Rose from playing the violin. Her playing may not be perfect, but for Rose, perfection isn't as necessary as a genuine love for making music.

And that is the tone she brings to the Northern Hills Fiddlers — an instructional group for children and adults who know a little fiddle, but want to learn more. Rose started the group in her basement three years ago and has since expanded it into a rehearsal area at Cardel Place in northeast Calgary — with room for more.

"We can definitely take more fiddlers," she said, adding that hers is the only group she knows of that takes adults, as well as children.

One of those adults is Airdrie's Cindy Warnock, who has made it a life goal to learn to play the instruments she loves. Having become proficient on the pennywhistle and the Bodhran, which is an Irish drum, Warnock turned her sights to the fiddle, but couldn't find a group in Airdrie with which to learn. Rose's group, although it is in Calgary, was just the ticket.

"I think it's great, because as long as you love the fiddle and music, you don't have to be extremely proficient," Warnock said, adding that while she continues to learn from Rose, she doesn't

yet perform with the fiddlers, but accompanies the group with her other instruments.

"I hope to be fiddling with them soon," she said.

For Rose, learning and playing music is about finding a person's individual gifts, not just having perfect finger position. She said her students are not advanced, but still know how to entertain crowds at malls, trade shows and seniors homes and that is what it is all about.

"These kids go to different places and play for people and they are just loved and get standing ovations," she said. "In this group they are special, they realize they have a gift."

Rose, who began playing the violin at age eight, was diagnosed with arthritis at age 17. After three surgeries, doctors told her she had to give up the instrument, so Rose put her violin in the closet and turned to chemistry, eventually earning her master's degree and becoming a math and science teacher.

But she always kept her violin in the closet, pulling it out now and then to play at home or at the occasional music camp. One day, a neighbour heard her playing and tried to get her to join a string quartet. It took some convincing, but Rose agreed and began rehearsing and performing. Once she realized she could play — with the help of heat wraps for her hands — she decided to train as a teacher and pass on her love of music.

"It dawned on me I could play the violin," Rose said. "I don't have to be a soloist in a symphony."

Once she had some students, Rose began to realize that most children will play classical music, but may lose interest after awhile — so she turned it up a notch and started teaching such pieces as *The Devil's Dream*, *Orange Blossom Special* and several Irish jigs.

Rose, whose 12-year-old daughter also plays with the fiddlers, believes the experience is beneficial for all the children not only in terms of musical experience, but in how performing helps them be more confident in daily life.

"I think the kids' joy comes from when they perform," she said.

Warnock encourages budding fiddlers of any age to join up, if they really have an interest.

"There's no sense in putting it off," she said. "You may never get to it."

The cost to join the Northern Hills Fiddlers is \$40 per month and fiddlers must provide their own instruments. For more information, e-mail to: catherine@northernhillsfiddlers.org or visit: www.northernhillsfiddlers.org

FUN WITH FIDDLES: Young members of the Northern Hills Fiddlers get in some practice time at Cardel Place in northeast Calgary. The musical group, which performs at various venues, welcomes those of any age interested in learning to fiddle.

Photo courtesy of the Northern Hills Fiddlers