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Weston Forum

Weston Practice-A-Thon to benefit pediatric brain tumor research

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Aaron Gaberman with violin with music teacher Franz Ryerson.

Weston Middle School music and orchestra teacher Franz Ryerson announced the second annual “Practice-A-Thon” will take place Saturday, Jan. 12, through Friday, Jan. 18, to benefit pediatric brain tumor research at New York University Medical Center under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey C. Allen, director of adult and pediatric neuro-oncology.

To kick off the Practice-A-Thon, Nichole Peyreigne, a Weston High School graduate and a

freshman at the Manhattan School of Music, will be performing Jan. 12 at 8 p.m. at the Norfield Congregational Church parish hall in Weston.

Nichole, a mezzo-soprano vocalist, will perform an array of opera arias and musical theater selections.

The 18-year-old Nichole discovered her passion for opera at age 15. She began her study of voice with Jennifer Foster of the Weston Music Center, and has studied with Manhattan School of Music voice teacher Joan Caplan.

Nichole spent the summer of 2007 attending the Bel Canto Institute in Florence, Italy, and the Dolora Zajick Institute for Young Dramatic Voices in Orem, Utah.

For the summer of 2008, Nichole was selected by the Comic Opera of Milan, Italy, to perform the role of Cherrubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

She is an honorary member of Citywide Youth Opera in New York under the direction of Andres Andrade.

Admission to the Practice-A-Thon concert is a suggested donation of \$25 for adults and \$15 for students and seniors, payable at the door. All proceeds from the concert will be donated to pediatric brain tumor research at New York University Medical Center.

Seating is limited; for reservations, call Teri Gaberman, 544-8854, or Betsy Peyreigne, 557-3192, or e-mail www.westonveterans@aol.com.

Practice-A-Thon

All music students in the Weston School District and students in area youth symphonies and music schools are invited to participate in the Practice-A-Thon by acquiring sponsors for the amount of time they practice their musical instruments during the designated week.

Information outlining the Practice-A-Thon will be distributed to all music students. The Suzuki Music School of Westport has partnered for the second year with Weston Public Schools in the Practice-A-Thon.

Ms. Ryerson developed the idea of a "Practice-A-Thon" when one of her orchestra student, Aaron Gaberman, age 12, was diagnosed with two rare brain tumors in May 2005.

Aaron began playing the violin at the age of 4 and started playing in the Weston Middle School orchestra while in the second grade. Prior to his diagnosis and during his cancer treatments, Aaron continued to play his violin and participate in the middle school concerts.

Currently, Aaron is a member of the seventh grade orchestra and chamber orchestra.

Aaron was treated by Dr. Jeffrey C. Allen, an expert in pediatric brain tumors at New York

University Medical Center.

Aaron completed six cycles of chemotherapy and later underwent six weeks of proton beam radiation therapy to his brain and spine. His tumors have disappeared.

“Things changed for me when I was diagnosed with cancer,” Aaron said. “Weeks of chemotherapy, blood transfusions, spinal taps, a mediport in my chest and a P/V shunt in my brain, countless blood tests, weeks of proton beam radiation, and losing all my hair. But other things did not change. I kept a positive attitude, I prayed, I played baseball, golf, the violin, continued with my schoolwork, and I never gave up.

“So, no matter how bad things get in your life, like not getting a good score on a test or your team losing a game, have faith, stay positive, and never give up on your dreams no matter what blocks it, even cancer!” Aaron said.

“Today, my cancer is in remission,” he continued. “Dr. Allen’s research made it possible for me to be a brain tumor survivor, and I get to enjoy all the things I love to do ... now it is my turn to help my doctor with his research, because it is my hope and dream that more kids will be lucky just like me,” Aaron said.

Proceeds from the Practice-A-Thon will help Dr. Allen and his research team, who have developed and continue to work toward the discovery of more effective and safer treatments for children diagnosed with brain and spinal cord tumors.

Brain and spinal cord tumors have the highest fatality rate of all childhood cancers.

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