

Drew's Gift of Music & Stuff

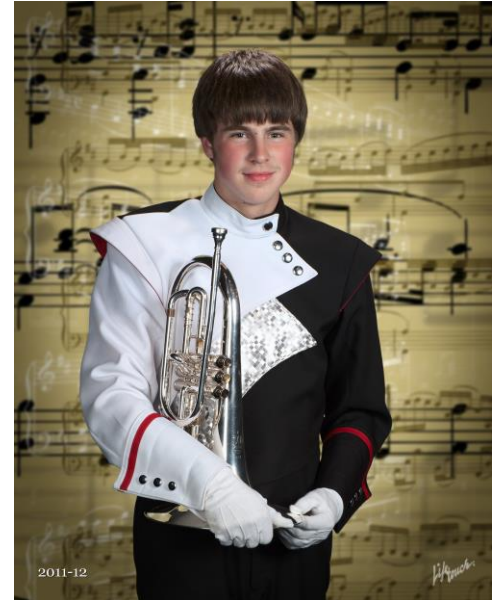
Drew Shearin was 12 years old and it was Christmas morning. He was hoping and praying that there was an electric guitar hidden somewhere in the house because he didn't see any sign of a package that looked even close to resembling a guitar under the tree.

The months leading up to that Christmas morning had been filled with pleadings for a guitar from his parents, but he knew that with the large combined Johnson/Shearin family, this special request could be out of reach. Just a few months before Christmas, Drew took up the French horn and loved it, but felt that an electric guitar would be a better way to reach people and share his thoughts with everyone. His desire for an electric guitar was also fed by the video game *Guitar Hero*, which only whetted his appetite to get a real electric guitar.

As the presents under the tree were becoming less, Drew tried not to let his anxiety show until there was just one more gift for him to open. It was a dreaded clothes box. He put on his best forced smile and opened the package, but it wasn't clothes, it was a guitar pick....just one little guitar pick. In his confusion, he turned around to look at his mom who, to Drew's surprise, was holding a bright red electric guitar. While Drew was trying really hard to fight back a tear—not cool when you are 12—smiles spread across the faces of the entire family. In silence, he put it the guitar in his hands. After wiping the 'dust' from his eyes and hugging his mom Deb and stepdad Bryan, he retreated to his room to admire his treasure in private.

He spent his first hour with the guitar pacing in and out of his room and back and forth between the computer and the guitar. Later that morning, he performed a song for the whole family, and in just a few days they were delighted to hear the first piece of music he wrote titled, "The Storm Song". He told his family, "close your eyes and imagine clouds rumbling in the distance." As he played on, he asked them to continue to share in his musical vision, "now, imagine the storm building". Drew carried his guitar everywhere he went, and it soon became an extension of his own self. All his family heard for months to come was the sound of Drew's pick upon his guitar. Little did his parents know how much creativity that red Peavey electric guitar would bring out in Drew.

The guitar sparked Drew's desire to learn how to play even more instruments. In the 8th grade, Drew started marching with the Knox High School band. This experience introduced him to more instruments and increased his love for music and composing. Drew's Gift was growing fast. He wanted a piano, which he felt would help him in his musical compositions. His family granted his wish by giving him a used keyboard. It wasn't long after that that Drew sought out a teacher to show him proper fingering technique. After the second piano lesson, the teacher told his mom that Drew was teaching him more than he was teaching Drew. Soon, music of all genres filled their home, and Drew witnessed his thoughts being shaped and coming to life through music.



Drew Shearin - Drew's Gift

Drew's musical passion grew even more in high school, where he was named Drum Major and performed in marching band, jazz and concert band, solo and ensemble performances, honors band and participated in school plays and musicals. However, Drew was not fully satisfied; his ultimate dream was to hear a band play his music and perform his compositions. Drew's determination was ever so strong, and he decided to bring a sample of his writing to one of his band directors, David Elliot, who led Drew to enter a piece in the Indiana Music Educators Association's (IMEA) "Composition Competition" in 2010. His concert piece "Uncertainty" won first place, and he accepted his award in Fort Wayne in January 2011.

Dr. Judd Danby, the IMEA Composition Competition Chair, asked his own band to play the winning composition, and in March of that same year, Drew and his family traveled to Lafayette Jefferson High School, where they attended the performance. Drew gave a speech thanking Dr. Danby, Director Thomas Barker, the Lafayette Jefferson High School Band, and all those who helped turn his dream into a reality.

In 2011, Drew again entered a piece of music into the IMEA for the competition. He sent the final copy to Dr. Danby, and just a few days later, Drew's life on earth was taken. The piece titled "The Sweetest Air Is Most Often the Thickest" won first place in the choral division of the competition.

On January 20, 2012, Drew's family and friends drove to the First Presbyterian Church in Fort Wayne to accept the IMEA award and to hear Dr. Eric Stark direct the Butler University Chorale in a performance of "The Sweetest Air Is Most Often the Thickest." The church was filled with every emotion as Drew's mom, Deb Johnson, accepted the honor with gratitude for the gift the Butler Chorale had given her and their family that day.

Those who knew Drew say it wasn't the music that made them love him, that was just a part of who he was. It was his warm laugh and smile, quick wit, and drive to give of himself that made him a special person. He had a way of making everyone feel important and share their talents as well.

Drew's mom told him that he had gifts from God, and if he chose not to use those gifts, God would give them to someone else. In every part of his life, Drew used those gifts and shared them beautifully.

The Johnson/Shearin family would like to give Drew's Gift to others through a fund they have created with the help of the Northern Indiana Community Foundation. The Drew's Gift of Music and Stuff Fund will provide support and will assist students in need to be able to play instruments and/or participate in cultural events.

To find out how you too can share Drew's Gift and help others succeed in exploring and developing their musical gifts, contact the Northern Indiana Community Foundation toll free at 877-432-6423, the Starke County Community Foundation at 574-772-3665, or visit Drew's memorial website at: <http://www.drewshearinmusic.com>.

If you would like to help with the project or know of a student who has a need for an instrument, please contact: drewshearinmusic@gmail.com.

This story was inspired by "Drew Shearin - DREW'S GIFT," written by his mom, Deb Johnson, on May 1, 2012.