

Blind teen calls disability ‘a blessing’

Posted By Karen Robinet



Life in the Pernice household can get a little hectic, according to wife, mother and songwriter Sydney Pernice.

Last week, the entire family — which also includes golf pro Tom Pernice Jr., 13-year-old Brooke and 14-year-old Kristen — was in Chatham to help raise money for the Making the Right Investment: MRI Campaign.

Having everyone in the California-based family in the same place at the same time is a rarity, said Sydney, following a clinic by her husband and before a concert by daughter Brooke, at the Chatham Golf and Fun Centre.

Brooke, who has been blind since birth, said the Lord told her at age seven that she would one day lead a worldwide ministry through music.

More recently, she said she was told to begin public speaking, sharing “the good news of the Lord, talking about the Lord and His blessings.”

At around the same time, Sydney, began hearing song lyrics and wrote them down for Brooke. On her debut CD, *Help From Above*,” Brooke refers to her mother as ‘The Messenger.’

“In June of 2006,” Brooke said, “the Lord told me I would see when the time was right.”

Since then, she said she has begun to see shadows and “some fireworks,” but must still rely on her white cane and family to move around.

From the time Brooke was three or four years old, Sydney said she’s always managed to find her way to the stage to sing.

But, after she shared her message from the Lord with her family at age seven, Sydney said the family became more serious about helping her pursue music.

For the past 18 months, Sydney has been home schooling Brooke as concert and public appearance requests have been escalating.

“We’re being as supportive as we can,” said Sydney. “We want her to answer her calling.”

But answering her calling has taken its toll with increased demands on the family.

“Over the last six months it’s been probably a little more than I can control,” said Sydney, adding that they have recently hired a manager for Brooke.

And, while Brooke and her band do receive payment for some of their appearances, that isn’t always the case, and Sydney said she and Tom have been footing the bill for the rest.

As well as the concert at the golf centre, Brooke also gave a concert at St. Paul’s Congregational Church on July 29.

Brooke said she has never viewed her blindness as a challenge, and in fact, calls it “a blessing.”

She credits her family, in particular, her sister for helping her live as independently as possible.

Many of her songs tell the stories of her life and family, including one about Kristin, and another about the agonizing separations from their father when Pernice is away at various golf tournaments.

Brooke said she remembers when she started school, Kristen ended up in tears when Brooke was teased.

"Mom never told her I was blind," said Brooke.

The girls are only 17 months apart, and are extremely close, said Sydney.

And, while Brooke has been travelling the nation doing concerts, and Tom has been on the golf trail, Kristen has been honing her own talents as an accomplished gymnast and cheerleader.

With no end in sight to Tom's golf career, Brooke's ministry or Kristen's gymnastics, the Pernices can expect to be busy for a long time to come.

More information is available at www.brookepernice.com.