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concert. Everyone sang along and someone shouted out, "That was a real toe-tapper!" To say I was impressed by this wonderful group of talented students would be an understatement.

I couldn't help but think of my son who is a musician. Through him, I understand the love of music and how important it is to this group of young adults. Through music, they learn social skills, confidence, discipline, organizational skills, confidence in speaking, camaraderie and a sense of belonging. All types of music are embraced at BHMA and acceptance of the music of others is the key.

Music is clearly the primary activity which is reflected with the emphasis placed on a wide variety of opportunities. BHMA also has a performance troupe comprised of the more experienced musicians in the school, which performs at larger and more challenging venues. The school offers numerous classes including elements of music, music appreciation, chorus, reader's theater, dance ensemble, voice lessons, and musical theatre. Overall, the objective is to bring out whatever musical talent the students may have. For Berkshire Hills Music Academy, music is the bridge that helps develop more pathways for improved communication.

Berkshire Hills Music Academy was founded six years ago by a number of individuals, including Kay Bernon and Sharon Libera, each of whom has a son diagnosed with William's Syndrome, a chromosomal disorder. This disorder brings with it a variety of difficulties such as heart conditions or lowered intellectual capabilities. Many of the students with this disorder have an affinity for music. The founders desired to develop a program that would address the issues affecting this population and accomplished that dream.

The academy is located on 40 beautiful acres and the students live in a stately 6,000 square foot mansion which houses class rooms, practice rooms, fitness areas, administrative offices and numerous music rehearsal and performance spaces. The school's location, in the heart of Western Massachusetts' Five-College area, allows students to take advantage of a deep wealth of musical and arts presentations at local colleges and universities. Many BHMA students become involved in community arts organizations in addition to their work at the school.

Entering students may or may not have their high school diploma. Another primary goal is to help students improve basic academic skills, and some are able to finish their high school graduation

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