requirements while at BHMA. The classroom focus is to provide good teaching practices for this population where students feel safe to accomplish improved skills. Sometimes students need to experience uncomfortable situations, even failing at times. Feeling safe and supported in their moments of failure encourages students to take chances and learn to succeed. Each success, day in and day out, increases confidence and the willingness to try more. The concept of cooperative learning and helping others ingrains the idea that each of them has much to offer others.

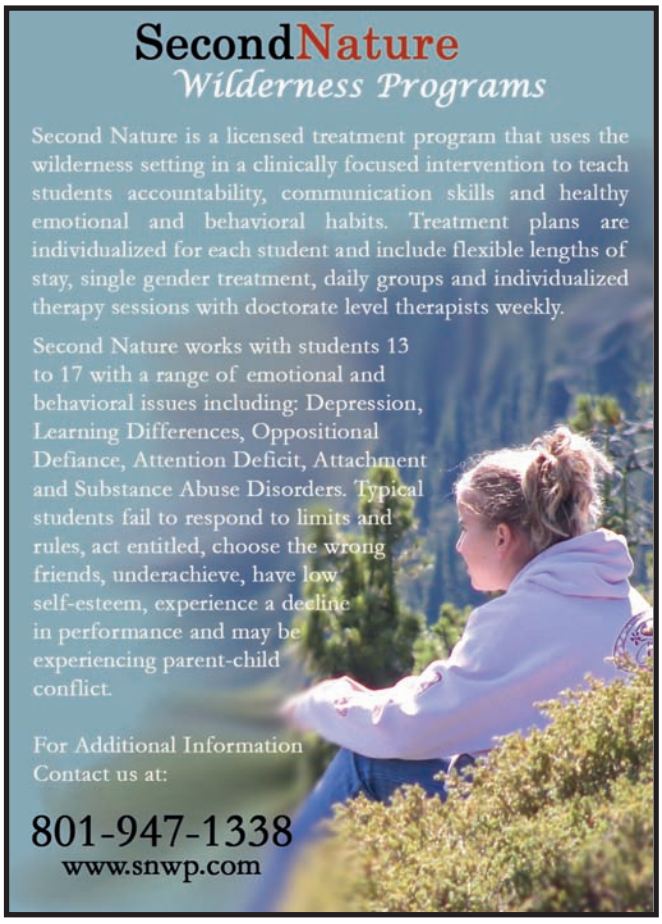
Social skill building is a primary focus for the school. Along with music, there are several areas of focus. Staff members provide excellent role models in all aspects of day to day living. At each meal, staff and students eat together family style. This enables students to practice good table manners and learn to have productive conversations with students and staff alike. The school social worker holds group counseling sessions with students to assist in communication and daily living skills. The primary goal is to have the students move toward independence. They learn to cook, take care of their rooms, and purchase food. Hygiene is also an important focus. Budgeting, banking, nutrition, current affairs, shopping and other life skills are taught.

The length of stay is two years, with the first year emphasizing basic academic and social skill development, along with musical training. The second year of the program continues social skill development and academic remediation, and also emphasizes vocational exploration and training, both in the areas of musical performance and in work in the field of music and human services. Students who want to pursue a career in music or just further their musical talents can remain at the school for the third year "Music in Careers" program. BHMA is primarily a residential school, but has recently begun accepting local day students.

BHMA also offers a summer program for ages 16 to 30 and has recently begun a Music Therapy Camp for young people ages 7 to 11. The focus of these summer experiences is encouraging individuals with special leaning needs to have fun, make friends, and develop their own musical skills.

Will Berkshire Hills Music Academy produce professional musicians? Most understand how

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