FROM THE TRENCHES I BY MYRNA SISLEN

Lasting Impressions

don't intend to get all touchy-feely with you, but we, as dealers, could be much better off emotionally and physically if we took the time to consider the small miracles that occur every day in our businesses — remarkable things that we may not even be noticing. In my case, the overlooked miracle involved a young man named Zachary Lynch. Zachary started taking voice lessons at Middle C Music in 2006 when he was 15 years old. His mother, Laurel Bergold, had been searching for some way to reach her



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autistic son Zachary. The Washington, D.C. school system was failing him, and she couldn't find special programs that addressed his needs. Laurel was not going to give up, so she brought Zachary and his sister Miriam to study voice at Middle C Music with our instructor Esther Haynes who has a real talent for reaching special-needs students.

Things began to change for Zachary almost immediately. He started singing and his world opened up. Zachary has a surprisingly good voice, and has chosen his own repertoire from the beginning, performing such songs as "I Could Have Danced All Night" and "Rainbow Connection." He has participated in every recital since 2006, and we have all watched in amazement as he has gradually opened up to the audience and become more independent.

Zachary and Laurel marched with us each year in the Palisades 4th of July Parade. We watched him learn to write his own checks, and he now has a job at the Smithsonian Institution. This past fall he sang the national anthem at the opening of a Georgetown Prep baseball game.

Laurel continued to bring Zachary every week to Middle C Music for his voice lessons. Last November, however, Laurel Bergold suddenly and tragically passed away. At the funeral, Zachary's sister Miriam spoke about his experience at Middle C and how important it was to him and especially to Laurel.

I've known Zachary well for nearly a decade. But it wasn't until Laurel's eulogy that I realized just how important Middle C Music was in his life. It was a real wake-up call: I needed to be more aware of my customers and students in an even more personal way. Not just to say "hello," which I certainly do, but to keep a closer eye on how their lessons are going and to ask more questions.

ENJOYING THE SMALL MIRACLES

Ve all know the power of music and how important it can be in people's lives. We know the effect we have — or that we hope we have — in our communities. But sometimes it's important to take a moment and think about the impact our businesses have on people like Zachary. I can assure you that Zachary's experience is not unique.

This isn't about sales or marketing or margins; it's about us taking a step back to observe what is happening on an individual level in our stores every day. We get so caught up in the day-to-day running of our business that we don't look at the individual benefits that our business brings about. If we take the time to enjoy those miracles, even briefly, we will be even more energized to run fabulously successful businesses.

Zachary still comes to Middle C every week for his voice lessons, now with his father, Jack. MI