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Nash shares her passion for music and working with young children

By Sarah Wheeler

Jennifer Nash is in the business of helping children grow.

Her dedication as a mother, combined with her lifelong passion for music, has allowed Nash to spread her expertise in early childhood education and child development, giving kids the opportunity to grow and heal through music.

Three years ago, Nash founded Music Sensations, a music and movement program for children, from newborns to 9 years of age.

The story of Music Sensations began in 1998, when the New Milford resident left her corporate job at Direct Mail to raise her infant twin sons, Tyler and Dylan.

Her journey of motherhood changed drastically when Tyler was diagnosed with autism.

"In the very beginning, he was diagnosed with sensory processing disorder, so I learned as much as I could about that," recalls Nash.

"You cannot ever cure sensory processing disorder, but you learn to live with it," she remarked. "Then, he was diagnosed with autism, and I wanted and needed to learn even more."

After Tyler's diagnosis, Nash began incorporating music into their daily lives at home. Seeing how music had a soothing way of calming Tyler, she started bringing both of her sons to a Kindermusik program.

The results were heartwarming.

"Tyler ate it up," she said. "He absolutely loved it."

That's when Nash realized just how much music was helping her son overcome life with autism.

"I said to myself, you know what? There's something to this," she said.

For as long as she can remember, music has been part of her life. She plays the drums, trumpet, baritone and guitar, and she has taught drum lessons for more than 20 years.

As her boys grew older and became more independent, the proud mom decided it was time to share her story. Tyler's success with music and movement programs inspired her to open Music Sensations in 2010.

As a licensed Kindermusik provider, many of Nash's eight classes currently offered at Music Sensations are Kindermusik based.



DEBORAH ROSE/SPECTRUM

Jennifer Nash, left, keeps the attention of the children and their parents, from left, Carter Crowley of Sandy Hook, Jennifer Bittner and Gia, 7 months, of New Fairfield, and Mary Elizabeth Hoczela and Emily, 21 months, by rubbing sand blocks together as children's music plays at a recent Music Sensations class in New Milford. Nash founded the music and movement program three years ago. Below, Nash amuses Gia Bittner with instruments at her first class.



DEBORAH ROSE/SPECTRUM

She is also certified in sensory processing disorder and interactive metronome therapy. Some of her classes are specifically offered to children with sensory processing disorder.

Nash also specializes in children with special needs and teaches a sign and sing class, in which kids learn to use sign language while singing along.

"Watching the kids explore the instruments and find different ways to play them is one of the greatest joys of the job," says Nash. "As adults, we'll play it the right way, the way we've been taught, but the kids create their own ways to play, usually a method we've never imagined."

Newly located at the Children's Movement Center in New Milford, Music Sensations works with many preschools in town as well.

Laura Andronaco, a preschool teacher at the Children's Movement Center, has known Nash for 12 years.

Andronaco believes Music Sensations enriches her own preschool curriculum. She praises Nash's "passion for music and

what it can do to enhance the lives of children."

For Nash and her students, being able to call the Children's Movement Center home has many advantages.

"The atmosphere is so joyful for the children," said Nash. "After they take a class at Music Sensations, many of them take advantage of the "Stay and Play" package and spend the entire afternoon here, exploring and exercising their body and brain."

The goals of Music Sensations and the Children's Movement Center are one and the same — to have a positive influence on the lives of children.

"There are no straight rules in music class, and the kids love that," Nash said. "It's a free moving class so they get to really explore their body movements and the instruments."

"They learn what the instruments are all about," she noted, "and some of them really find the passion in the music."

To Nash, watching the children grow and progress is the ultimate reward.

Tammy Hammershoy of Western Connecticut State

University in Danbury would recommend Nash's classes to anyone.

"One can easily see that she loves what she does," Hammershoy said. "She has a true passion for working with children."

When she is not busy running Music Sensations, Nash dedicates her time to the New Milford school system, occasionally substitute teaching and working as a para-professional for special-needs kids.

Her sons, Tyler and Dylan, are now 15 years old and are "doing wonderfully."

For information, call Music Sensations at 203-417-5372 or email Jennifer Nash at musicsensations@charter.net.

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