

Elliott family to showcase sensational strings

By **BRENDA ERICKSON**

Register & Bee staff writer

DANVILLE, Va. — For the past two years, the Elliott family of Newport News has been a musical archetype for the Suzuki method of teaching violin.

Founded by Dannielle Weems-Elliott, a Suzuki violin teacher and former student who had long held dreams of being part of a musical family, the Elliott Family Quartet showcases not only how young children can develop music ability regardless of age, but also how musical exploration can enrich their lives.

This weekend, the Elliott Family Quartet will play two free shows at the North Theatre in a concert sponsored by The Links Inc., an organization made up of African-American women dedicated to exploring educational, civic and intercultural activities as well as showcasing African-American talent to encourage local students to allow their own dreams to take flight.

With the Elliott family show, “we’re trying to inspire the students,” said Xelia Hickson, a former Danville educator who serves as chairwoman of The Links’ Freedom of the Arts committee. “They can look at these young people and see what they can do if only they apply themselves.”

In addition to matriarch Weems-Elliott, the Elliott Family Quartet features 11-year-old Brendan, 9-year-old Justine and 6-year-old Sterling. Each has performed since they were toddlers, refining their musical abilities with each passing year.

Brendan, who has played violin since the age of 3, is currently a sixth-grade student at Hampton Roads Academy. But his resume is already much richer than most students his age. At the age of 6, he became the youngest mem-



NOTABLE: *The Suzuki method of violin instruction was mirrored after how children develop language skills, and has been a 40-year success story.*

ber of his first youth orchestra. Today, he serves as concertmaster of the Peninsula Youth Orchestra, comprised primarily of high school students. He has taken home first-place honors for the past three years in the preteen category at the National Air Force Talent Contest, and he placed first in the Peninsula Youth Orchestra’s concerto competition last year.

Justine, a fourth-grader at Sanford Elementary School who has played violin since the age of 2, was accepted into her first youth orchestra at age 7, where she was the group’s youngest member for two years. In 2004, she served as concertmistress for that group, and now she is the youngest member of the Peninsula Youth Orchestra. Justine has placed first in the 6 to 8 age category of the Na-

tional Air Force Talent Contest for the past two years.

Sterling, the youngest member of the Peninsula Sinfonia, began playing the cello at the age of 3, and has won first place in the 3 to 5 age category at the National Air Force Talent Contest for the past two years.

The group’s repertoire is far-reaching and ranges from Vivaldi’s “Four Seasons” to the spirited “Orange Blossom Special,” with jazz standards like “My Funny Valentine” thrown in for good measure.

The group, which gets behind-the-scenes support from family patriarch Garth Elliott, the only non-musician, performs regular concerts at a variety of venues ranging from nursing homes and churches to black tie galas.

The Elliott Family Quartet will perform at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Friday at the North Theatre, located at 629 North Main St.

Admission to the shows is free.

For more information, contact the North Theatre at (434) 792-2700.

courtesy photo

The Elliott Family Quartet will perform at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Friday at the North Theatre, 629 North Main St., Danville, in a concert sponsored by The Links, Inc., a group dedicated to African-American arts and education.

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