

# Worship provides purpose through music ministry

By Melody Brinigar  
Staff reporter

Pace yourself as you hike the 77 steps. Cross through the threshold beyond the mammoth stone columns and navigate around the shadowy-dark furniture.

Glance to your left.

Follow an enchanting glow through the door of the financial aid office.

Sitting at the desk looking up from her computer is Kaitlin Kendel, philosophy and religion junior. She is the glow. Her eyes shine and her smile has an undeniably illuminating sparkle.

Kendel carries some kind of joy with her. "It's different. I don't know how to explain it. I have a happy joyful disposition. It's a blessing from the Lord," said Kendel.

As a self-proclaimed floater at El Dorado High School with an abundance of musical talent, Kendel never planned to attend college. "I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't have direction, a plan or a path," said Kendel. She just wanted to play music.

Kendel's mother, her guidance counselor and her youth pastor motivated Kendel to use her musical talents to attend college.

Kendel has a gift for music. She plays the trombone, saxophone, double bass, violin, mandolin, ukulele, piano and guitar.

Because of her musical talent, Kendel was accepted to more than a dozen colleges as a music major.

With attending college in mind, Kendel moved more than 85 miles from El Dorado to McPherson during the summer of 2012 after she graduated from high school.

Doctors found a lump on her mother's breast that summer. The cancer was advanced. It was confirmed at a stage three level.

Kendel felt isolated living in McPherson where she knew no one. She struggled financially because she was sending money home to support her mother.

"I wasn't confident in my dad or my sister to take care of my mom. I don't think they realized the full scale of what was going on," said Kendel.

She moved home. Kendel told her mother she wasn't going to college.

Her mother said, 'If you don't go to a school, you can't live here anymore.'

Kendel moved back to McPherson.

The cancer was taking effect on her mother. She had surgery during the week of Kendel's finals. "I didn't know how to deal with things. I got overwhelmed. I did poorly on my finals. Some I didn't even take," said Kendel.

The next semester Kendel's mother had a double mastectomy. The cancer was gone. She was scheduled for reconstructive surgery.

Then the doctors discovered a lesion on her cerebellum. "My mother sounded like she was dying on the phone," said Kendel.

Kendel abandoned everything. She left all of her responsibilities to be with her mom.

In a short time, Kendel's mother was doing well. She was on the road to recovery. The doctors said she wouldn't be walking for two to six months. Kendel's mother started walking in six weeks. She was breathing easier. Kendel could see her mother was getting stronger. Her skin was healthy and her hair was growing.

By June, Kendel was pleased and thought her mom was going to be okay. Kendel was living and working in McPherson, traveling to El Dorado to support her mom on the weekends.

One day, Kendel saw the "No Secrets" video on YouTube that was produced by the Worship Outreach students at Southwestern College.

"The video drew me to Southwestern. I could also be closer to my mom," said Kendel.

During the summer of 2013, she decided to transfer from McPherson to Southwestern. Kendel wanted to do more music ministry. She liked that Southwestern had an established music ministry program. This encouraged Kendel to change majors. "I didn't want to be just part of the band," said Kendel.

By August Kendel arrived at Southwestern. Kendel faced a



Kaitlin Kendel, philosophy and religion junior, sings worship songs during a Worship Outreach outing in Salina. (Jon Woon/Facebook photo)

few challenges upon arriving in Winfield. Kendel said, "Everything closes by 9. In McPherson everything is open until 11:30. In El Dorado everything is open all the time." She was not accustomed to making things happen within fixed time limits.

In addition, McPherson had more diversity. "When I came here it was like, white and blond hair. All my roommates are white and they have blond hair. It was just really shocking," said Kendel.

However, the greatest challenge was receiving an update on her mother's cancer condition. She found out on a Thursday that her mom had cancer all over her body. The doctors gave her two months to live.

Two days later, on August 24, 2013, Kendel's mother passed away.

For days afterwards Kendel went to a friend's house in Augusta. Kendel said, "I didn't have anywhere else to go."

The feeling of isolation was all too familiar. "I knew actually no

one. I was all alone again," said Kendel.

She was sad and was crying all the time. "I didn't ever want to feel that way again," said Kendel.

Kendel had a heart-to-heart with God, "Okay God, if you want me to function as a human being you are going to have to give me peace. Not necessarily take the pain away, just give me peace about it."

Her peace is evident. She is upbeat and wears a smile. "I think it is a God thing," said Kendel.

Kendel wears several hats at Southwestern. She is the music director and guitar player of the worship outreach team, Keynotes. She creates the display table outside Messenger which reflects the lesson to be discussed in chapel and worship outreach. She is also a student assistant in the financial aid office.

Brenda Hicks, director of financial aid, works with Kendel. "She smiles all the time. She's walking through life very well and you can just tell that. She exudes that," said Hicks.

Matthew Sigler, visiting scholar and interim minister, works with Kendel on chapel designs and planning the chapel worship services. "She's got a depth to her and she's dependable," said Sigler. "She is incredibly kind, and incredibly empathetic."

Hicks said, "She is a great asset to the community."

Sigler said, "I can't wait to see where she is in five to 10 years. She's got so much positive ahead of her."

Aside from her responsibilities at Southwestern, Kendel's hobbies include getting together with her friends partaking in what they call, "Knit your face off Fridays." It's a time where she and her friends will knit or crochet while watching movies or listening to music together.

"Even if you don't know me, just know that I have joy that comes from someone," said Kendel. "It's a God thing."

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