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Palmer 'Idol'?

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By **LORI STABLE**

lstable@repub.com

PALMER - Twelve years ago, Lynn M. and Jan P. Lis were outside when Lynn heard a voice coming from inside the house. It was their 3-year-old son, Noah, standing on the coffee table, belting out the national anthem.

"I could see his little face out the window. I thought, 'Oh my God, he's good,'" she said.

Now 15 and a sophomore at Palmer High School, Noah S. Lis is still singing, and his talent is gaining him fame around Western Massachusetts.

A soloist with the Westfield-based Dan Kane Singers, Lis has performed in the Dan Kane Christmas Spectacular the last three years.

Last year, he released his own compact disc, "Simple Things," featuring songs such as "Dream Lover" and "Let it Be." He has sung at the Holyoke Mall at Ingleside, at the Eastern States Exposition and at Springfield Falcons and New Britain Rock Cats games. He even sang for skater Nancy Kerrigan at "Halloween on Ice" at Springfield's MassMutual Center.

The affable Lis displayed some of his talent on a recent afternoon. In his "studio," set up in his parents' living room, he sang a Christmas carol as he played the keyboard. His grandfather, Donald J. Massey, looked on with pride. Some have said Lis has the presence of a young Frank Sinatra.

"I liked singing. I didn't know I had a good voice," Lis said.

But after a trip to Kane's summer camp three years ago, Lis was asked to join Kane's group. From there, his career took off.

He sings regularly with other teens from Dan Kane's group: Traci Mnych of Suffield, Sam Plotkin of Somers, and Meghann Fahy of Longmeadow. They all make appearances on "Simple Things," and there has been some talk about the teens releasing a Christmas disc. The teens all have their own CDs, and sing duets or backup for each other.

Kane said the teens drew a crowd of thousands when they performed at the Holyoke Mall around Christmas. Lis, he said, "was Mr. Personality," playing to the crowd.

"He's a handsome, talented, outgoing kid," said Kane, who added that Lis has an "unusual-sounding voice" that doesn't remind him of anyone. Kane said Lis has the charm of Bobby Darin and that, when he retires, he would like to see Lis take his place.

"When he's 21, he'll be absolutely scary, he'll be so good," Kane said.

Lis has been playing piano since he was 6 and also plays the saxophone for the high school band. He said

Don McLean is his favorite singer, and his favorite song is McLean's "American Pie," another song on his CD. He also likes Rod Stewart and enjoys the classics.

"I think the people like the songs that they know. They can sing along," Lis said.

"Even now, people will say to me, 'You must be so proud.' Mostly I think, 'Wow, he's got a great gift,'" Lynn Lis said.

She said her son sings all the time, so much so that they never needed to play Christmas carols. He was like a built-in radio, she said.

She said Noah is a natural musician. At 6, he played the national anthem on the keyboard, and at age 11, debuted his talents at the school variety show by singing Lizzie Maguire's "This is What Dreams are Made of."

"The girls loved it, the boys heckled and the teachers cried," Lynn Lis said.

Noah Lis knows he wants to go to college and is thinking about the University of Massachusetts at Amherst because of its band. He wants to be either a professional singer or a music teacher.

As for singing in the future, he'll continue his appearances and wants to audition for "American Idol."

"He has unbelievable stamina when it comes to singing," said his grandfather, also in the Dan Kane Singers.

"He's a showboater. He likes to go out to the audience," Lynn Lis said.

Noah Lis performed at the Santa Train last month with Mnich and Kaylyn Utley, of Belchertown. They donated the sales from their compact discs to the Palmer Grange's "Christmas for Kids" program. Utley, who sings with Dan Kane, also has her own CD.

When the teens sang at the mall, they donated their CD profits to Make-A-Wish, a foundation that grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses.

Lis said he will see what the future will bring. The family knows that the music business can be difficult to break into. But one Dan Kane alum, Ashley Gearing, has enjoyed success on the country charts.

"To make it in the music world, you have to be in the right place at the right time," Lynn Lis said.

Pointing to his heart, Massey, Noah's grandfather, said, "You have to have that."

More information about Noah Lis can be found at www.noahlis.com and the Dan Kane Singers Web site www.dankanesingers.org. Kane said he has 161 singers, of which 50 are children. Everyone auditions, he said.

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