



DON DUNCAN:

Concert to be Big Event For Young Bellevue Cellist



Linda Johnston is a vivacious, freckle-faced ninth-grader at Bellevue's Highland Junior High School. She plays first chair in the cello section of the school orchestra and is chairman of the honor society.

When the Sammamish High School choir raised funds for a Scandinavian tour last year, Linda — not even in high school — was one of the top fund-raisers. She worked almost to the point of exhaustion on a car wash.

Linda isn't very big, 5 feet 4 inches and maybe 100 pounds after a big Sunday dinner, but her enthusiasm and her musical voice make her stand out from the crowd.

THE DAUGHTER of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald F. Johnston goes to school when she can. But there are days when she isn't up to it. That's one of the problems of having a kidney ailment that will require either a transplant or a kidney machine.

Dahl Merrell, who directs the Highland orchestra, describes Linda as "the type who's always smiling, always giggling, because life is so much fun."

Recently there was a challenge session in the orchestra's cello section. One of the players beat out Linda. No outward emotion. But a few days later Linda demanded a rematch "and beat the kid."

Linda's plight and fighting spirit have touched a lot of lives; students, teachers, counselors. Now the whole community has a chance to become involved.

A benefit concert, in Linda's honor, will be held at 3 p. m. Sunday in Bellevue's Interlake High School gymnasium, 16245 N. E. 24th St.

There won't be any arm twisting. But there will be a box at the door for contributions to the Linda Johnston Fund — for the day when surgery or a kidney machine are the only way to keep the smile on Linda's face. Checks may be made out to the Linda Johnson Fund, c/o Bank of the West, K-Mart Plaza, Bellevue.

Linda at first balked at being the center of attention. She told Merrell the concert should be used to pay off the deficit from the Scandinavian trip. Merrell pulled his rank.

MANY OF THE musicians never have met Linda, but they have heard about her. They have practiced hard, on their own time, to provide a real musical treat.

Don Phelps, principal of Bellevue Junior High School and KOMO-TV personality, will sing.

Merrell and Mrs. Margaret Lieberg will direct the combined orchestras of Interlake and Sammamish high schools in compositions by Schubert, Hayden and the Czech-American composer, Vaclav Nelhybel.

Ed Krenz, coordinator of music for Bellevue schools, will direct the combined orchestras and more than 100 Tillicum and Highland junior-high string players in a Sibelius composition.

Concert-goers are advised to look closely at the cello section during the Sibelius number. It won't be hard to find the youngster with freckles and the big smile.

Yep, Linda Johnston.



LINDA JOHNSTON