



Junior Hoedowner

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All About Natalie and Kelsey Smith

Here is a note from Julie Smith, mother of two daughters -- two young fiddlers -- Natalie 9, and Kelsey 6, about how they got started in fiddling:

"Just after Natalie turned 7, we started to think it was time for her to start learning an instrument. The question was which instrument? At the time, she was very interested in the "Little House on the Prairie" series and had read them all. When she talked about the books, Natalie kept mentioning Pa and his fiddle. She has also always really gravitated toward Celtic and bluegrass music. So, we started to think maybe Natalie should try fiddling. She was a little unsure, so she and I decided to try learning together. We were so fortunate to find such a wonderful teacher in Eileen Walter and we have been working hard ever since.

"It has turned out to be a great fit for Natalie. She really likes the faster tunes and has been driven to improve by her desire to play them at full speed. We have been asked many times why Natalie doesn't just take violin lessons and we always say because she wouldn't stick with it. She really loves fiddle tunes and her approach is to take each tune by storm. Classical music just isn't her speed right now. She

is also really motivated by playing in some of the fiddle contests. It has been a great way to meet other young fiddlers and is always so inspiring to watch such amazing talent. She is never more eager to practice than right after a contest.

"About a year after Natalie started her lessons, her younger sister Kelsey decided she also wanted to give it a try. At first, her biggest reason was so she wouldn't be bored during Natalie's and my lesson. Thankfully, this gave way to her really enjoying playing. Kelsey also really enjoys the contests and the feeling of accomplishment after getting up on stage and playing her best. Kelsey is the first to admit that she really dislikes having to practice, but she is willing to stick with it every day because she knows it is the only way to reach her goal of becoming a great fiddler one day.

"Besides fiddling, both Natalie and Kelsey are avid readers and love gymnastics. Natalie is also active in Girl Scouts and loves any chance to have a sleepover or spend time with friends. Kelsey is having a blast being a member of the first ever all-girls t-ball team in her league.

"Natalie's favorite tunes that she plays right now are Gravel Walk and Rat Cheese and she would really like to learn Runaway

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Fiddle. Kelsey's favorite tunes to play are Five Foot Two and Annie Laurie. She would really like to learn Cajun Fiddle. My favorite tune to play is anything that we can play together. That's when I think it is the most fun!

"Fiddling has become such a part of our family's life and we are so grateful for all of the very kind and supportive people we have met through fiddling. It has been so fun learning all together and helping each other in our efforts to improve. We also really appreciate Dad who puts up with three fiddlers practicing every day and always supports us!"

Tune of the Month

Gravel Walk is an Irish adaptation of a Scottish reel. It is sometimes played by two fiddles, an octave apart.

Key A Dorian

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