

## Campus Section

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### Music major plays through metal allergy

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Beth Leishman has fought through learning disabilities and various allergies to pursue her passion in music. **WILLY ROSE | Scroll Photography**  
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Beth Leishman has fought through learning disabilities and various allergies to pursue her passion in music. According to [webmd.com](#), one of the most common skin allergies to metal is nickel.

Beth Leishman, a senior studying music education, has overcome a learning disability and allergies, which has enabled her to become who she is and who she wants to become.

Leishman said her struggles began when she learned about her dyslexia in the second grade.

“I had struggled in school for a long time because of my learning disability,” Leishman said.

She said she often felt stupid, and some teachers wouldn't help her, causing her to not believe in herself. She said after joining band, her teacher did not let her make excuses due to her learning disability, telling her she could do it.

Craig Waldram, her former band teacher from Tehachapi, Calif, said if they needed to work anything out, they would do it together.

"You still get those teachers who push you as hard as they can," Leishman said. "And that is when you realize that you can almost thrive under any situation."

Waldram said he knew about her learning disability.

"I don't think Beth used that as an excuse," Waldram said. "She chose to just work harder."

Christine Leishman, Beth's mother, said Beth has been singing since she was little.

"Music was definitely a passion for her, but I think one of the things that got her through her dyslexia was her musical instruments," Christine Leishman said.

Beth Leishman said after she started playing the clarinet, she noticed something was wrong and was constantly getting sick.

She said she was sent to a specialist after several tests and found no luck with her regular doctors.

"I went and saw a specialist because the infection wouldn't go away. My lips were swollen with blisters and were constantly oozing, and they couldn't find out what was wrong," she said.

Beth Leishman said the doctor had read an article on musicians with allergies. She said this influenced the specialist to conduct several tests; finding out that she was allergic to the reed in the clarinet. She said the doctor had her switch to an artificial reed, solving her allergies.

Beth Leishman said during her sophomore year of high school, her band teacher asked her to switch to trombone, due to the sound the synthetic reed was creating.

"Then about three months after playing trombone I started getting sick again. Same blisters, same oozing, swelling and everything," Leishman said.

She said her and the doctor didn't do the tests again because they knew she was allergic to the nickel and brass of the trombone.

Leishman said she didn't want to quit.

"I'm stubborn Though it is bad for my health, I still like to [play my trombone]," Beth Leishman said.

Christine Leishman said when Beth Leishman started playing the clarinet and other musical instruments, a whole world opened up to her.

Beth Leishman said music can be personal, and affect everyone on different levels, whether it is for entertainment, an outlet, or a coping method.

“The way I let all my frustration out was through music,” Leishman said. “Music helped me cope with life [and what was going on]. Without it, I don’t know what I would have done growing up.”

She said her dyslexia sometimes affected her reading of notes.

This caused her to read a rhythm backwards.

She said the good thing about music is that it can be learned by ear.

“I can listen to it, and I can play it [again]. And if it doesn’t match up it’s easy enough to fix it,” Leishman said.

Leishman said her ideal job was to do something similar to her band teacher back home, because of his influence and helping her with her struggles.

“I grew up in a small town ... we only had one band teacher for the whole school district, so he taught every grade,” Beth Leishman said.

Beth Leishman said Waldram was the number person one who wouldn’t let her give up.

“He just had so much faith in her that she could do this,” Beth Leishman said.

Beth Leishman said she starts her student teaching Winter 2015, and then she will find future work wherever she is accepted after graduation.

“I decided if I could do [what my band teacher did for me] for another student, then it would all be worth it,” Beth Leishman said.

Waldram said he thinks she is crazy for striving to be a band teacher, but that she could do it because she is a hard worker.

“I think she definitely made it a point to succeed and be successful, despite things of opposition,” Waldram said. “She is a person that would be honorable in whatever she chose to do.”

She said she had to dedicate herself by practicing up to 20 hours a week washing her mouthpiece after each session.

“When I am playing I can’t have any moisture on my lips otherwise that makes me break out,” Beth Leishman said. “If I am just a little sick, then it is easy for me to break out.”

She said by switching to all natural products, using creams and sometimes taking an oatmeal bath, help reduce the rashes or hives she gets from touching the metal.

“It’s never easy for everyone,” Beth Leishman said.

Christine Leishman said Beth was an inspiration for her siblings.

“I think she has handled all her obstacles with grace,” she said. “Her stick-to-it-ness, and the fact that she hasn’t let anything slow her down or stop her.”

Beth Leishman said going through life’s challenges including her learning disability, allergies and growing up was not easy.

“It might take years, but you have to decide if it is something you really want and if you’re willing to do anything for it,” Beth Leishman said.

She said when someone is dedicated things fall into place.

“Is it going to be worth all of the struggle, all of the pain, all of the dis-conveniences,” Leishman said. “Because if [what you want to do] is, then find any way to do it.”