

CORAL GABLES

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Connecting Communities

Palace Coral Gables Resident Shares her Love of Music with Staff Member

BY KERRY GREEN-PHILLIPS

When the melodic sounds of the piano fill the air at The Palace Coral Gables, it is not always coming from one of the many talented entertainers who perform daily for residents at the active retirement community.

Instead, it's resident Sandy Davis sharing her love of music with Julian Hevia, the community's fitness trainer.

Davis, a retired professional music teacher who taught students in Miami-Dade County Schools for over 15 years as well as privately, has graciously volunteered to teach Hevia the piano.

"I have always had a passion for music," Hevia said. "When I was a child, I wasn't encouraged to take piano lessons, but it's always been something I've wanted to do. Sandy would see me in the fitness center and share how much she missed teaching. I suggested she take me on as a student and we'd both fulfill our wishes."

The duo has now been working together for two and a half years. Balancing work, family, and attending nursing school seemed to leave little time to practice but Sandy has continued encouraging him, telling him you can always squeeze in 20-30 minutes.

Drawing on her years encouraging her young students to practice, Sandy believes there's always time.

"She'd ask me what time I woke up," he recalls. "If I said 7 a.m., she'd tell me to wake up 30 minutes earlier."

Sandy said this was an approach she used with her students. She would ask how long they watched TV and tell them to use some of that time to practice.

"No one likes to practice, but it's just about making the time," she explained.

Both Davis and Hevia share a similar personality trait since both are disciplinarians. While she can quickly determine if he has practiced, he keeps track of how many times she comes to the fitness center during the week. Both are comfortable chastising each other.



Sandy Davis shares her love of music with Julian Hevia, The Palace at Coral Gables' fitness trainer.

Learning as an adult has meant starting from scratch without any foundation for Hevia.

Davis stresses music theory and not taking short cuts. She is known for drilling theory and started Hevia reading music from the very beginning while continuing to work on his timing.

"My brother's keyboard at home wasn't being used, so I use it to practice at home," he said. "It's very rewarding learning to play. Sandy taught me classical pieces and short jingles, and it's quite exciting when it starts to sound good."

Davis said that although there are some similarities between teaching children and adults, there are some distinctive differences too.

"Children have greater dexterity," she explained. "I've always preferred working with beginners and giving them the foundation which I'm laying for Julian."

Davis feels many of today's children are being deprived of the joy of music. Learning piano or musical instruments is no longer offered in many schools and parents don't seem to encourage their

children to indulge in the arts.

The discipline Davis instills in Hevia also carries over to her life at The Palace Coral Gables, her address since 2013. She bakes delicious homemade cookies for her neighbors and the community's employees, and often is called the "Cookie Lady." In addition, she finds time to write plays and music and design handmade birthday cards. She enjoys the friends she has made since moving to The Palace and joins her girlfriends in lively card and board games.

"I simply can't take being idle," she admitted.

Sandy devoted many hours volunteering for the Florida Federation of Music Clubs and found it so rewarding to see her students compete.

"It's more important than money," she said. "The rewards have been in knowing the education I've provided is something that you will never lose."

To learn more about The Palace at Coral Gables and tour the active retirement community, visit www.ThePalaceCoralGables.com or call 305.445.7444.