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Arlington junior high's music students serenade ill former director at home

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ARLINGTON — For all that former Shackelford Junior High orchestra director Jo LeRue Todd gave to the school, students traveled to her home Wednesday to give something back: a serenade.

The 45 boys and girls, led by current director Kathy Patterson, set up on a grassy patch across from Todd's house in the Interlochen neighborhood. Todd, who has colon cancer, couldn't come outside. But she was listening, Patterson assured the players.

"Her husband just opened the blinds and she can hear us just fine," Patterson told the group.

For about 20 minutes, the sound of violins, cellos and other stringed instruments drifted through the warm afternoon air.

Todd began working for Arlington schools in 1985 and retired in 2005, according to the district. She taught at Shackelford for several years and was also assistant director of the orchestra at Lamar High School.

Patterson said Todd was an inspiration as a music educator.

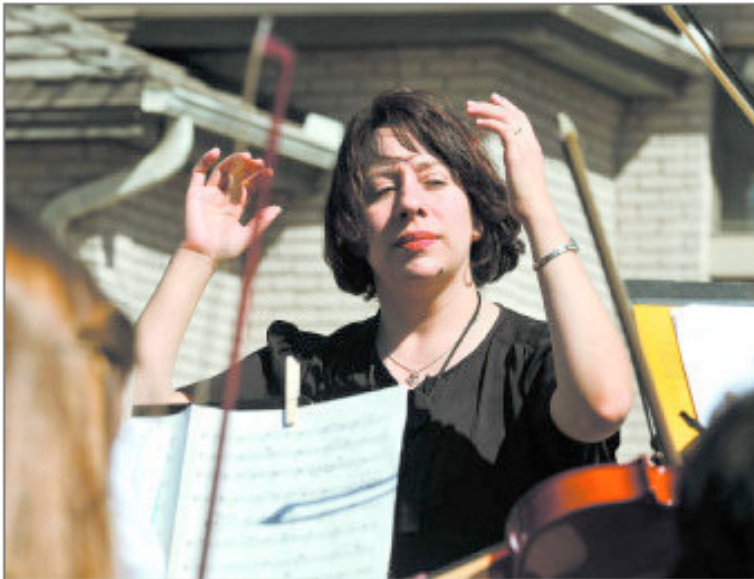
"Jo was a teacher that gave 120 percent every day," Patterson said. "She didn't have a day where she gave any less than that."

Gary Todd, Todd's husband, said the children's performance was a pleasant surprise that would mean a lot to his wife. He came outside to take photos and applauded each piece of music. The program at Shackelford was a huge part of his wife's life, he said.

"She lived and breathed that program," he said.



From left, Faith Yu, Lucy Lin and Nohelli Estrada — first-, second- and third-chair violinists — perform in Jo Todd's honor with the Shackelford Junior High orchestra outside her home Wednesday. STAR-TELEGRAM close or Esc Key PHOTOS/BRUCE MAXWELL



Kathy Patterson, the orchestra's current director, leads the musicians. "Jo was a teacher that gave 120 percent every day," Patterson said.



Byron Alley, front, plays cello while James Fisher plays bass during the serenade in Arlington.