



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Belinda Stohner performs with a group of strings. Stohner, who grew up in Newton, credited influences such as teacher Rachel Dirks for her musical career today.

Newton native in Super Bowl Halftime Show

By ADAM STRUNK
NEWTON NOW STAFF

As the story goes, a young Belinda Stohner was looking for a free lunch. Decades later, that wish prompted a career and now a Super Bowl appearance.

Stohner, Newton native and NHS Graduate, will be playing violin and leading a 12-person string section during the Super Bowl halftime show as part of a performance by the Musical Artist Shakira.

"I told my husband and we just laughed so hard. It was the craziest phone call to get," she said of finding out she would be needed last week. "I couldn't believe it."

Stohner has been a musician most of her life, playing in Newton's Middle School and High School orchestras, jazz band, the Newton Mid Kansas Youth Symphony and the Wichita Youth Symphony.

She attended the University of Miami and lives down there now as a freelance violinist and music educator.

The Super Bowl will be held in the city she lives and through professional connections she received the offer. "I'm friends with Shakira's guitarist who is her music director," she said. "He knew they would need strings and he thought of me. He said, 'can you get a group of strings together' and I said, 'yeah, let's do it.'"

That meant a lot of time spent on the phone to fill out a roster willing to undertake the time commitment on short notice.

"I had to make a million phone calls," she said. "Surprisingly, a lot of people couldn't do it. It took a whole team to find them all."

Over the last weeks, Stohner said she's been a part of several rehearsals and trial runs. Those followed background checks and tight security.

"Performing the music part is the easiest. It's not that much music and as professionals, we're expected to do those things," she said.

But, the hard part? "The show is being built day by day, so you don't really know what the schedule is going to be," she said.

Eventually, all the work will come together with her on an arm of the stage performing to Shakira, after her song, "She Wolf."

"It doesn't make me nervous. You're so focused on it in the moment; there's so much energy and adrenaline," she said.

Stohner said, as a kid, she would always watch the halftime show but not always the football game.

That was when she lived in Newton with her parents, Rosa and Simon Ho. The family ran China Garden, a former Chinese restaurant in the city.

Growing up, she took piano, while her sister participated in the Newton Mid Kansas Symphony Orchestra.

After watching her sister and orchestra perform, Stohner and the family were treated to lunch.

"I was like, 'Oh, I'd like to be able to play for free lunch,'" Stohner said.

And that's what she did. She went on to perform violin with her sister and the symphony. She said the violin

made more sense to her than the piano.

"I think me and my sister were like the two youngest members ever," she said.

Stohner credits experiences with the orchestra, the Wichita Youth Symphony and orchestra teacher Rachel Dirks for helping form her into the musician she is today.

Dirks taught orchestra at the high school and grade school level and now is Director of Orchestral Studies at Kansas State University.

"Rachel Dirks was a real force when she was in Newton," she said. "There's a high number of professional musicians per capita when she was in Newton. She brought in so much energy. She took my class to Italy and Austria and my sister got to perform with her at Carnegie Hall."

That learning turned into a career for Stohner. Outside of teaching and freelance performances, she performs with a string quartet and also has a project called HOBUCO, which pairs classical music with readings of children's stories. They're currently playing a mash-up of Beethoven's Fifth and the Three Little Pigs.

Stohner graduated from Newton High School in 2002 and she said she still has family living in Newton and the area, although her immediate family has moved to warmer climates. Her father, Simon, passed away in 2018.

She said she is happy for the chance to perform during the Super Bowl, but the gig didn't come with any comp tickets.

"But, you get paid and you get to do the

halftime show with Shakira," she said.

And, as for whom she'll be rooting for?

"Of course, we got to root for the Chiefs," she said. "You can take the girl out of the country, but not the country out of the girl."



Stohner

Hospital welcomes Holly Terrell as radiology director

Newton Medical Center (NMC) hired Holly Terrell as its new director of radiology.

"I'm thrilled to welcome Holly to NMC," explains Heather Porter, NMC chief clinical officer. "With an extensive background in radiology, Holly will be a true asset to our hospital and patients."

Terrell most recently served as the Manager of Imaging Services at Wesley Medical Center.

"I'm excited to be a part of Newton Medical Center," says Terrell. "I want to make a positive impact for our patients. I feel blessed for the opportunity to join an organization that feels like family and promotes individuals' ability to make a difference."

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