



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY SMITH

Reina Brown performs each Wednesday this month at Don Savino's Piano Bar and Grill in Waldorf. Wes Biles on bass and Jeff Neal on drums back her up.

Blind most of her life, Brown envisions a career in music

BY SARA K. TAYLOR
STAFF WRITER

Reina Brown has no problem being in front of an audience. She's been in the spotlight since she first started tapping out tunes by ear at age 4 on her grandfather's piano.

Center stage is familiar ground for the 21-year-old singer and musician who has been blind most of her life.

"I think I have a God-given talent," said Brown, who graduated from the Maryland School for the

Blind in Baltimore and attends classes at the College of Southern Maryland.

Brown first started playing piano, the same one that still sits in her grandfather's Dorchester living room, when she was a toddler.

"I remember [it was] the theme from 'Jeopardy,'" said her father, Robert Brown. "She did it by ear. She'd [also] sound out nursery rhymes."

Soon Robert and his wife, Arlene, were searching for a piano teacher to teach their oldest child.

Many of the teachers begged off, claiming Brown was too young and her parents just overly enthusiastic about their child's hobby.

Eventually they found a local teacher, Carol Timbrooks, who was willing to take on the challenge of a precocious-but-talented youngster.

Brown said that as a child she played classical pieces, but the strict criteria that come with playing Mozart and the like were too confining.

"You have to play it as the artist

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