



Photo by Macklin Caruso

## Kat Perkins kills at PAC

Kat Perkins belts out her rendition of “Jolene” by Dolly Parton at the NL-S Performing Arts Center on Sunday, April 14. Perkins, who made her national debut on the reality show “The Voice,” performed at the Lion’s Club-sponsored concert to raise funds for both the New London and Spicer Lion’s Clubs. Proceeds went to supporting local causes such as The Link and the Community Endowment For the Arts, the latter of which provides funding for art programs at NL-S such as visual arts, speech, performing arts and music. Funds also supported local Lion’s Club initiatives like the KidSight program, which provides free vision screenings for children and helps their families pay for eyeglasses.

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event, maybe write a little note on a picture saying here’s where we were on this day, you know, like ‘today we saw Brett Blocker from the Lakes Area Review and went for a little walk,’ I can bring those memories back to her that way,” said John.

However, even if Colleen is unable to remember their recent outings, her son remains content in continuing their routine.

In addition to allowing him to develop his skills as a photographer and his mother an opportunity to enjoy nature, John’s new role as caregiver also teaches him to be present in the moment.

“You can get so frustrated with all the noise, the news, the politics and all that, but with photography, you can just go out into nature and tune that all out.”

The ability to appreciate beauty where others may not see it, he added, is a value his mother instilled

in him as a child. While others complained about the inconvenience of Minnesotan snowfall, Colleen insisted on being grateful for the shimmer it gave to tree branches; the backdrop it provided for cardinals.

His “present” mindset not only allows him to appreciate the nuisance of the occasional polar vortex, but also, the overlooked benefits hidden in even the most debilitating of illnesses.

“In a way, it’s almost a blessing,” he said of Colleen’s memory issues, “because mom

doesn’t really dwell on dad’s death. There’s not a constant sadness, she’s just present in the moment.”

So too, has the illness allowed them both to explore latent artistic talents. While John has improved his photography skills, Colleen has taken to the visual arts, creating pointillism paintings during her day programs at the Bethesda senior living center in Willmar.

Mostly, though, the benefit has simply been enjoying one another’s company.

“She’s gotten me to slow down a lot, to just stop and take a look around. And we have fun together. We laugh a lot, we’re amazed by the things we see,” John said.

“Part of me feels bad, but this is really her journey. And it all comes back to finding things that bring you joy, even if it’s for a small period of time.”

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