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Beth Wendling, liked playing flute, singing

Beth Wendling loved drama and the theater, especially when she was on the business side of the footlights.

So she was never happier than in early December, when she performed in "A Night of Children's Theater" at St. Henry District High School in Erlanger, where she was a freshman.

"It was her first high school play," said her mother, Julie Michels Wendling, of Erlanger. "It was a small part, but she loved it."

Beth -- christened "Elizabeth Anne" -- died Wednesday at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati of complications from surgery to correct a scoliosis condition. She was 14.

She enjoyed singing and playing the flute, and she had a winning smile and a sweet disposition that earned her many friends and endeared her to her family.

She also had a sense of responsibility beyond her years. "She took care of her brother and sister, and there were lots of kids that she babysat," said her mother. "They say some people have old souls -- that was Beth."

An A and B student, she developed a variety of interests in her brief life. She was an avid reader -- she favored fantasy novels like the Harry Potter series -- and a good enough photographer that her pictures won ribbons in 4-H competition at the Kentucky State Fair.

Her scoliosis had worsened to the point that a brace could no longer correct it, so she underwent spinal fusion surgery. The procedure went well and she was seemingly on the mend at home when complications developed and she had to be readmitted to the hospital.

Surviving in addition to her mother are her father, Dan Wendling of Erlanger; a sister, Madelyn Wendling of Erlanger; a brother, Josh Wendling of Erlanger; grandparents, Don and Jeannine Wendling of Fort Wright and Birdie Michels of Erlanger; and great-grandfather, Bill Wischer of Fort Wright.

Mass of Christian burial will be at 11 a.m. Monday at St. Henry High School. Visitation will be from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday at the school. Burial will be in St. Mary Cemetery, Fort Mitchell.

Memorials are suggested to the Beth Wendling Scholarship Fund, in care of St. Henry High School, 3755 Scheben Drive, Erlanger, Ky. 41018. Linnemann Funeral Home, Erlanger, is handling arrangements.