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ENTERTAINMENT

Canadian singer/songwriter Tenille gives back on cross Canada tour

Brice Roy/Globe Staff

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Singer/songwriter Tenille is on her cross Canada "Play It Forward" tour designed to encourage youth to make a difference in their community.

Too often, individuals who achieve fame forget their roots and become self-centered. These celebrities become a black hole only hoping to pull in more fame and money while giving nothing back.

Alberta's own Tenille is a breath of fresh air for those looking for a role model whose heart shines as bright as her star.

The 19-year-old Grand Prairie native, is using her status as an icon and entertainer to encourage others to give back to their community and make the world a better place.

On her current "Play It Forward" tour, the singer/songwriter is traveling to schools across Canada recognizing young leaders, spreading her message and entertaining thousands of people along the way.

"We are playing shows and reaching out to kids in schools encouraging them to do what they do best, which is play and then play it forward," said Tenille. "We want the listeners to help other people and make a difference in their own environment in simple ways. They can do what they love to make their environment a better place."

After a five-week, 29 school pilot run in November, the "Play It Forward" tour is now in full swing and heading to Lacombe Junior High on April 15.

In addition to sharing her message of giving back and entertaining the kids, Tenille's tour recognizes young leaders who have made their communities a better place for others.

At each school, three students will be given a \$75 honourarium with which they can "play it forward" in any way they choose for the

school. At the end of the tour all of the leaders recognized will be entered into a draw for the \$10,000 prize pack, which includes a donation to the charity of their choice and money for improvements to the winner's school.

"It really sparks something in me to go across Canada and hear stories about the amazing things these kids do and recognize them for their efforts and maybe inspire the others in their class to something similar," said Tenille. "I feel like they're such sponges and enthusiastic audiences. I love to be able to communicate with them and have them relate to the message in the songs."

In addition to her "Play It Forward" tour, in the past four years Tenille has raised \$350,000 in support of the Grand Prairie Youth Emergency Shelter Society, called the Sunrise House through the Big Hearts for Big Kids concert fundraiser.

"Five years ago when this started, I first heard about the shelter and that students within my own neighbourhood, my classroom and my hometown were sleeping in those beds every night," said Tenille. "I wanted to be able to do something for them. Unfortunately, the shelter had to close its doors, but I wanted to use my passion for music to bring people together to help them. We've been able to raise a ton of awareness and reopen the doors. It's been a life-changing experience."

The desire to give is something Tenille was taught at a young age and had instilled in her through her family.

"I was raised in a family that taught me about the power of giving back and how important it is to be grateful for the opportunities you receive," she said.

Since asking her mother for singing lessons at age five, Tenille has always taken her music seriously. At age 13 she was given a guitar as a gift from her grandparents who sparked her to begin a career in the industry.

"When I was 13 I picked up a guitar and started writing my own music, and I feel that was the beginning of my idea to pursue music as a career," said Tenille. "I'm really grateful to have found my passion and be able to do what I love every day."

At present, Tenille's new single "Dear Heart", from the album Light, is climbing the charts and her video for the song is on YouTube.

She will perform at Lacombe Junior High on April 15.

For more information on Tenille or the remaining dates on the "Play It Forward" tour visit www.tenille.ca.

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