

LETHBRIDGE Herald

Inspiring young people

WEDNESDAY, 07 NOVEMBER 2012 02:01 ZENTNER, CAROLINE

Caroline Zentner
lethbridge herald
czentner@lethbridgeherald.com
Igniting the spark of compassion in youth has become a full-time endeavour for country music artist Tenille.

The 17-year-old is in the midst of her Play it Forward tour visiting schools all over Alberta. Tuesday she stopped at Wilson Middle School for a show that was both performance and motivational speech.

"We just wanted to inspire that pay-it-forward message and be a part of inspiring kids to follow their passion. I'm so grateful that I got to follow mine while still being in school. I really wanted to be out there encouraging kids to do the same," she said.

Tuesday's performance included acknowledging three leaders in the school. Katherine Head-McSweeney, a Grade 6 student, Justin Roszell, a Grade 7 student, and Cali May, a Grade 8 student, each received a cheque for \$75 to Play it Forward in their school. Leaders from all schools visited during the tour will be entered into a draw for \$10,000, with \$5,000 to go to a charity chosen by the winner and \$5,000 for a Play it Forward program at their school.

"The message today was to inspire youth to do what they do best, which is play. And then we want to encourage them to go out and, whatever it is that they do, make a difference with it, play it forward," she said. "Today we had a great time, hopefully encouraging dream-chasing and passion-finding and reinforcing the significance of leadership within this amazing student body."

Tammi Viney, a Wilson Middle School teacher and facilitator of the school's leadership club, said the performance by Tenille and her two fellow musicians fit well with school goals.

"We have a character education initiative this year. We're trying to instill those character education words in our students - empathy, compassion, perseverance, respect, responsibility - and her tour fit right into our goal. In addition to that, we started a leadership club this year in order to help build positive leaders in our school community, to help encourage students to lead the way and to take ownership of the school," Viney said.

Tenille Nadkrynechny, from Grande Prairie, started singing when she was five and started playing guitar and writing her own songs when she was 13. In 2011 she was the youngest person to be nominated for Female Artist of the Year at the Canadian Country Music Association. She was named Female Artist of the Year at this year's Alberta Country Music Association awards. She's also the 2012 CCMA Slaight Music Humanitarian award winner. Tenille released her debut album REAL in June 2011.

Tenille founded an annual music event in her home town called Big Hearts for Big Kids. The event has raised nearly \$200,000 since it started in 2010. All proceeds go to Sunrise House, the only emergency youth centre north of Edmonton. Play it Forward is an extension of the idea.

"This started with a dinner table discussion with my family, how I was going to go to post-secondary education or how I was going to be able to be committed to my passion and to be living it. Schools are some of my favourite audiences to perform for so this was a dream of mine and a vision to be able to reach out with a message," she said.

She found sponsors for the tour and has been doing two shows a day since she started the tour a couple of weeks ago. The five-week tour will end in a couple of weeks and next March Tenille will embark on a Canadian Play it Forward tour.



Herald photo by David Rossiter
Tenille (Nadkrynechny), a country music singer from Grande Prairie, performs for students at Wilson Middle School during her Play it Forward school tour Tuesday. Play it Forward is an in-school presentation that uses music and storytelling to spark interest, ignite change and fuel passion while recognizing positive leadership efforts of youth. Tenille was awarded the 2012 Alberta Country Music Association Award for Female Artist of the Year.