

Singer's benefit concert for women's shelter a way of saying thank you

BRIGHTON INDEPENDENT NOV. 27/14



By John Campbell

News - Castleton - Cheryl Casselman's music is her diary, each song an entry.

The Castleton-area singer/songwriter revealed much about her life with her first CD, *Any Road North*, released in 2008.

All ten songs were written by her, and two of them won Ontario Independent Music best country awards in consecutive years.

Some of them are "painful," says Casselman—"real tearjerkers" but "very heartfelt."

They tell what she's gone through in a highly accurate way, she says. "I'm pretty open."

One of Casselman's favourite songs from the CD is *No More* which talks about not waiting any longer "for life to happen" to her and instead "taking more control" of her destiny.

"I like to sing that song to remind myself," she says, of a time, 16 years ago, when things weren't so good and she had to make a major decision: leave a "bad relationship." She and her two children, one and four years old at the time, found safety and comfort at a women's shelter, where they remained for two weeks.

Staff there "turned our lives around" through counselling. It's "like taking a psychology course 101" that helps you "learn about

yourself," Casselman says.

When she went back home she asked her partner of seven years to leave.

"It was really, really tough," being a single parent and unemployed.

"It took me three years of counselling to get back to a healthy place," she says. The first year was "like a blur, [she was] so emotionally wrought."

But Casselman got back on her feet, then found love, and settled into a relationship that's lasted 12 years. The two plan to get married next summer.

Throughout it all she continued to write songs—"I've always had a passion for music," she says—and she performed with local bands before deciding to strike out on her own.

"I wanted to establish myself as a singer/songwriter," Casselman says. "I was really aiming to make a mark and I feel that I did, at least to myself [with her first CD and subsequent awards]."

Last month she released her second CD, *Cheryl Casselman*, recorded at 3A Studio in Hastings, owned by local country music singer Aiden McGill. Three of the songs are hers and she will perform them this Sunday, November 30, at The Joy of Giving Christmas Show she's organized as a fund raiser for Cornerstone Family

Violence Prevention Centre, the place that turned her life around.

It's her way of saying thank-you, which she began doing in 2008 with a benefit concert that raised \$3,800.

Her target is \$5,000 this time around.

Casselman will long remember staff at the shelter showing up at her door just before Christmas, her first on her own, with "three huge garbage bags full of gifts" for her children, provided by students at a local high school who had adopted her family without knowing who they were.

"I was so moved by that," she says, that every Christmas she believes she "should do something" to express her lasting gratitude.

The show will take place at Best Western in Cobourg, starting at 2 p.m. She will be joined by the musical group Joyful Noise and musicians Katelyn Brant, Randy Morrison (Canada's top fiddle player, Tim Sanders and Will Murray. Tickets are \$15, children admitted free. There will be a silent auction.

Casselman's latest CD is available at Downey Pharmacy in Colborne, Nessie's Gifts and British Fare in Cobourg, and Roxy's Hair Salon in Campbellford. You can also order by emailing <c.cass@hotmail.com>.

Castleton-area singer/songwriter Cheryl Casselman will perform songs from her new CD at a Christmas show this Sunday in Cobourg, with all proceeds to go to Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre. The show starts at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$15.

Photo: John Campbell

■ MUSIC: Laura Smith returns Nov. 30

NORTHERLAND TODAY NOV. 27/14

Shelter Valley welcomes back popular

CECILIA NASMITH
Northumberland Today

GRAFTON — One of the most popular highlights of the 2014 Shelter Valley Folk Festival was the magical performance of Laura Smith.

The Shelter Valley people are

welcoming her back for a Nov. 30 performance in Grafton.

Smith is a singer-songwriter who may be best known for *Shade Of Your Love* (which got copious radio play) and *My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean* (titled *My Bonny*). With fans from Denmark to the Yukon

— and a collection of ECMA, Juno and Gemini Awards — she is perennially listed as one of Canada's finest singer-songwriters.

After a break from music, Smith has released *Everything Is Moving*, and this is a rare opportunity to see her live in

concert close to home.

The show, also features acclaimed guitarist and producer Paul Mills, who has shared previous bills with Stan Rogers, Natalie and Buddy MacMaster, Ron Hynes, Angus Finnan and Chris Hadfield.

This special-edition Sunday Afternoon Music Café is a rare opportunity to warm up that chilly last afternoon in November with seasonal beverages and treats, plus some exceptional music.

Doors at the Alwick-Haldimand Township municipal

performer

building (at 10835 County Rd. 2 in Grafton) open at 3:30 p.m., and the show runs from 4 to 6 p.m. Tickets are \$25, including HST (for more information, call 905-349-2788).

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