

SBM SOUTH BRUNSWICK MAGAZINE

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From Brunswick to Bali

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Rising Star**
Logan Murrell

**Brunswick
County**
Gets MADD

**Southport
Says Goodbye**
to Randy Jones



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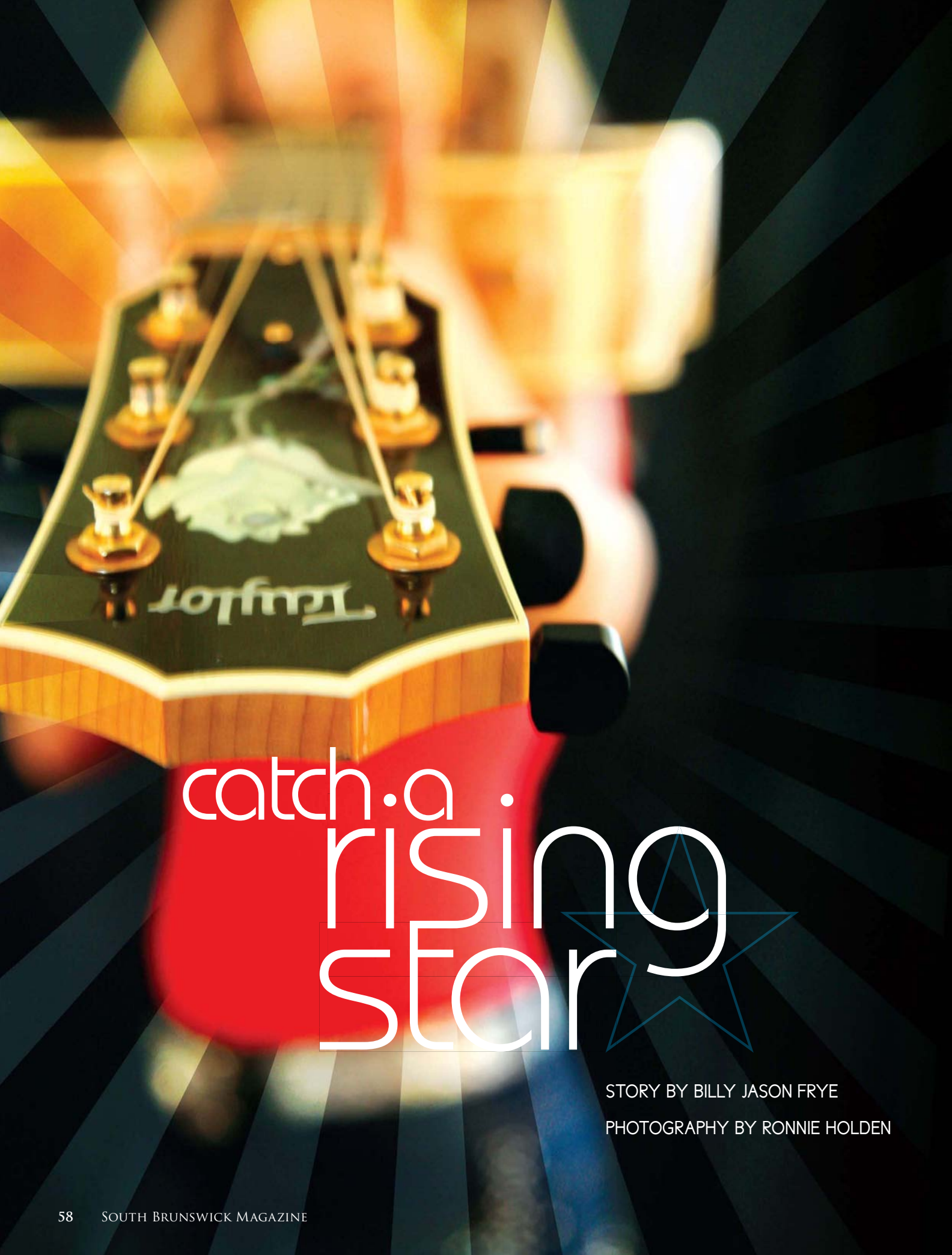
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Southport Says Goodbye to One of Her Own



catch.a rising star

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Logan Murrell's

smoky voice, veteran confidence and commanding stage presence are the perfect disguises for her age. At 14 years old, she's on the verge of becoming one of the big names in the next generation of country music. If you saw her performances at this year's Azalea Festival in Wilmington, you can say you saw her when. If you missed her there, don't worry, she's coming back in May for a show at the Odell Williamson Auditorium in Supply and you'll get your chance then, if it doesn't sell out.



"I started singing when I was two," Logan says with a shy smile. "Actually, it was two weeks shy of my birthday, but we call it two. I got up in front of our little country church and sang 'This is the Day the Lord has Made,' beginning to end, without missing a word or note. At least that's what they tell me."

Logan's mother, Julie Murrell, chimes in: "The preacher said 'If anyone has a song in their heart, come on up and sing it.' Logan went right up there and sang."

"I never looked back," Logan says. "I've been on stage since."

The scene is easy to picture: An adorable, blonde two-year-old on stage at the front of the eager congregation; her song filling the air; the stunned silence of the adults as she finishes; she does a little curtsy and takes her seat.



When Logan says what all professional musicians say, “Music’s always been part of my life,” she means it. She was singing at church at two, playing piano at four, guitar at five, mandolin at nine. Her mother attests to the fact that she’s always been musical, saying “we sang to Logan all the time as a baby, in fact, she was singing as soon as she was talking.”

In the years following her church debut, Logan developed her sound, performing all across eastern Tennessee. From Knoxville to Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, she played and sang in parks and on the street, working her way up to small theaters (like Elwood Smoother’s Ole Smokey Hoedown where she played when she was nine), and eventually to even more prestigious venues. In 2006, at age ten, she was the featured

vocalist of the 2006 Clayton Christmas Concert with the Knoxville Symphony. In 2007 she took the stage at the Tennessee



Top: Logan Murrell sings the national anthem at a Brunswick Community College basketball game.

★ ★ We sang to Logan all the time as a baby, in fact, she was singing as soon as she was talking. ★ ★

lifestyle of a 14-year-old musician on the rise.

“When Logan started eighth grade this year she said she felt

that everyone changed,” says Julie. “I’m not sure if they changed or if she changed. I’ve seen a maturity in her school work, her music, her performances and her personality that I don’t think many of her classmates had.”

The maturity that Julie noticed in Logan is the result of both her years on stage and of being raised in a supportive but practical family.

“I tried to guard Logan’s childhood,” Julie says. “I didn’t want us to be one of those typical showbiz mom and kid pairs. We tried to teach Logan to be humble, confident and hard working, to give joy and happiness to others, and to always do her best.”

At karaoke birthday parties this humility would show itself as Logan would choose older, less cool but more difficult songs to sing so she wouldn’t upstage her friends with a polished performance.

Theatre with the Knoxville Opera for their production of *La Bohème* – a huge accomplishment and point of pride for Logan. She spent the remainder of the 2007 season as a performer at Pigeon Forge’s Country Tonite Theatre.

Logan has stayed busy between school and her Tennessee gigs by traveling the United States playing fairs and festivals, putting in innumerable hours in order to make her name and sound known to industry professionals and festival organizers. Despite her schedule, she maintained a straight-A average in school and managed to balance being a student and a teenager with her aspiring music career. But this year she and her parents decided to try home-schooling. Now she works at her own pace and the classroom schedule is certainly more accommodating to the



"I'd pick someone other than the Dixie Chicks. Maybe Dolly Parton or Patsy Cline, something the rest of the girls wouldn't pick, but still songs and singers that I love," Logan says.

If you look at the artists she listens to and lists among her influences, you won't find country musicians exclusively — you'll find bluegrass, rock, jazz, gospel and pop musicians, too. Of course there are country legends like Dolly Parton and Patsy Cline, but she also lists Chicago, The Beatles, Karen Carpenter and James Taylor as major influences. New crossover country acts like Rascal Flatts make the list, as do a phalanx of jazz guitarists and singers as well as flat pickers and bluegrass bands. Right now, two of her favorite musicians are Randy Corner and Eva Cassidy.

Randy Corner, a singer and guitar legend from Texas, has lived the life of hardship so often sung about in country music. In his sixties and nearly blind, Corner has become an unlikely but powerful influence on Logan, who listens to him every night. "I find so much emotion in his voice, so much heartache," Logan says. "Every time I listen to him I hear something different, some nuance that colors his voice and motivates me to strive for the same level of emotion in my own performances."

Eva Cassidy, the late singer known for her interpretations of jazz, blues, country, rock and pop standards, recently came onto Logan's radar after someone told her they sounded alike. "The first time I heard her, the floor dropped out from under me," she says. "I felt honored when someone told me I sounded like her." Logan says she's listening to Eva Cassidy's arrangements and vocal phrasing and trying to learn from them.

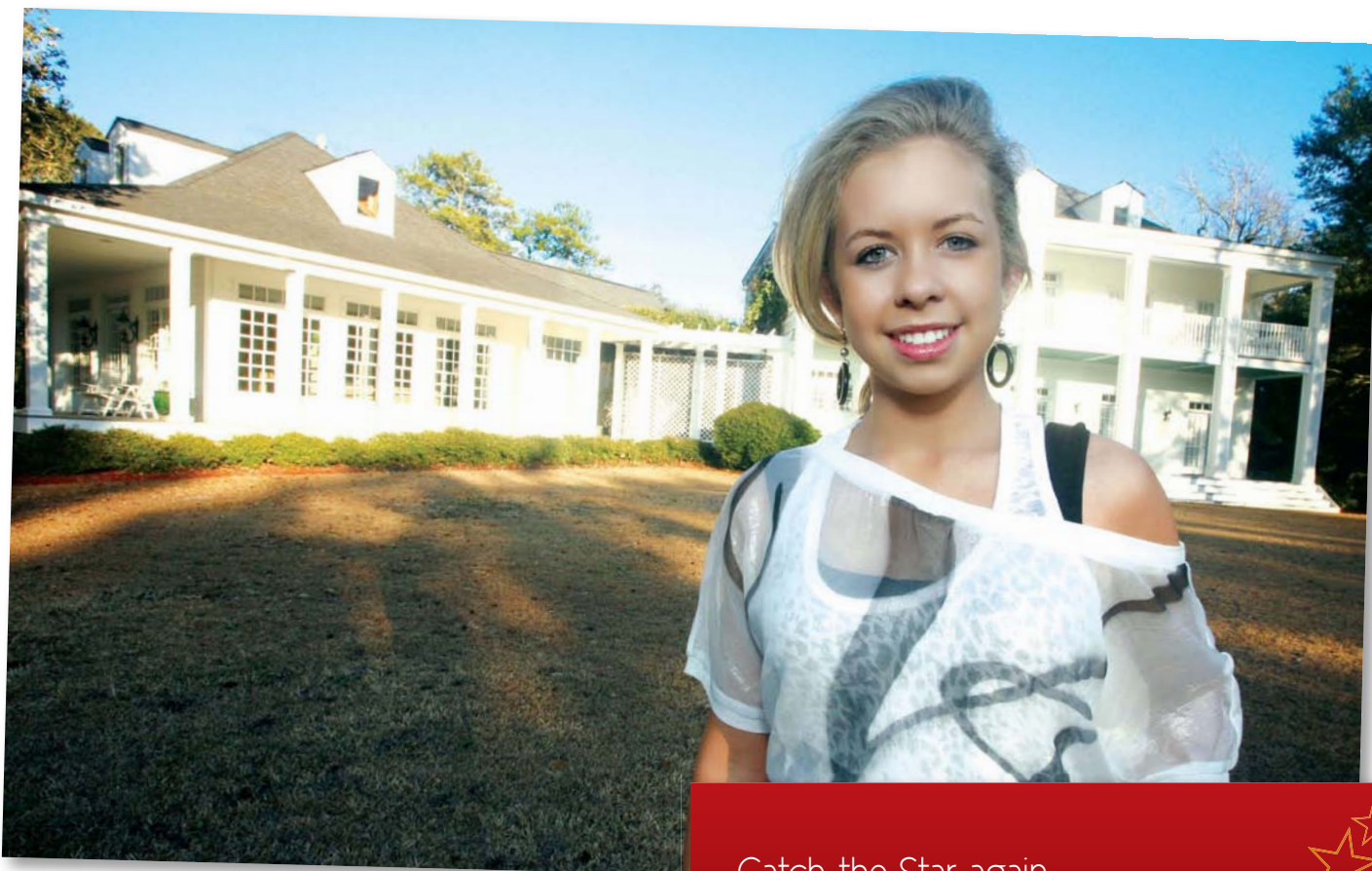
"She's put a lot of time and hard work into studying Eva," Julie says. "In Gatlinburg an audience member came up to me after Logan's set and said 'I've always wanted to see Eva Cassidy and I think I just did.' I was stunned."

Early in Logan's career, Julie vowed not to "parade Logan around Nashville" in search of representation. Instead she made her a promise: When you get good enough, they'll find you. It became a sort of mantra for Logan, who poured herself into her craft and worked tirelessly with many coaches — guitar, voice, piano — to shape her natural gifts into what she has today.

If you've seen Logan perform, it should come as no surprise that her work ethic is showing dividends. Recently someone in Nashville contacted her for a meeting to discuss a recording contract. Although the identity of the person, who Julie says is "a major country star, someone whose name you'd immediately



Top: 14-year-old Logan has been performing since she was 2; Middle and bottom: Logan met Ronnie and Clarice Holden of Sunset Beach through a mutual friend; here, she serenades Ronnie and goofs off with Clarice at Clarice's store, Island Breeze.



recognize,” is still secret and the exact details of their meeting are still under wraps, Logan showed genuine excitement at the possibilities before her. “My mom’s promise is coming true,” she says. “We’ve worked hard and prayed hard to get to this point and our prayers are being answered and our work is paying off.”

One of the ways her prayers have been answered is through the generosity of others. Through a mutual friend, Ronnie and Clarice Holden of Sunset Beach heard about Logan and her need for a stylist. Clarice thought she and her store, Island Breeze, could help, so she had Logan and Julie come for a visit. While here, in addition to getting a new wardrobe for Logan, they explored the area for music venues, finding openings at the Azalea Festival Queen’s Coronation and scheduling a show at the Odell Williamson Auditorium for May 18.

Through it all, Logan maintains the humility and professionalism of someone three times her age and says that in the end she doesn’t want fame, she only wants respect and longevity. With her talent, you can bet she’ll have all three. 🌟

Catch the Star again

If you missed rising star Logan Murrell at the Azalea Festival you can still see her at the Odell Williamson Auditorium on May 18 at 7:00 pm. Contact the box office at (910) 755-7416 or (800) 754-1050 ext. 7416, or email them at tickets@bccowa.com for ticketing information.