

arts & culture

Rockie Lynne to Present Patriotic Holiday Concert

The Army veteran and Top 40 musician performs Sunday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Thanks to the help of Villagers for Veterans, Nashville singer-songwriter Rockie Lynne is making his long-awaited Sharon debut.

“I’ve been wanting to bring Rockie to The Villages for a long time,” said Marie Bogdonoff, CEO of Villagers for Veterans. “He’s a veteran, he’s super patriotic and he’s really passionate about supporting veterans and their families.”

With three Top 40 hits and appearances on shows like “Good Morning America” and “Fox and Friends,” Lynne has made a name for himself on the national music scene. Designed for audiences of all ages, “For The Love of Country: A Salute to What Makes America Great” is a country and Southern rock-style tribute to veterans, patriotism and the nation that Lynne loves.

Typically, Lynne spends Memorial Day weekend performing with Rolling Thunder in Daytona, but this year, Bogdonoff convinced him to make a stop in The Villages instead.

“I brought him here because I thought it would be a great introduction for Villagers to get to know who he is,” said Bogdonoff, of the Village of Pine Ridge. “He’s got a great story ... someone who could have gone in such a different direction to instead make such a positive impact — it’s something worth sharing.”

The country music singer visited the community earlier this year, treating Vietnam veterans to a private concert and free preview screening of “Rockie Lynne: Where I Belong,” a documentary about Lynne’s search to find his family and his purpose.

Lynne was abandoned in a dumpster when he was a couple of days old. From infancy to about 5 years old, he lived in an orphanage called Barium Springs Home for Children.

Every so often, a man would come to the orphanage to play guitar for the children. That was when Lynne discovered his love of music.

“I was about 4 years old and, man, I’ve never really done drugs, but I think that must be what drugs are like,” he said. “He sang ‘I’m going to Alabama with a banjo on my knee’ and I thought, ‘I’m going to do this for the rest of my life.’”

Lynne was adopted at 5 and spent the rest of his childhood growing up and playing music in a small town in North Carolina. By high school, his teenage self thought he was already a professional. He wanted to continue his education at Musician’s Institute, a renowned performing arts college in Los Angeles. So to pay for tuition, he joined the U.S. Army and became a paratrooper in Fort Bragg’s 82nd Airborne Division.

After finishing his tour, Lynne moved to L.A. and studied guitar at Musician’s Institute. Lynne said that at the time, he was naive enough to think that since he was the best guitar player in high school and in the barracks, he would go to California and be the next Eddie Van Halen. He would even play on the street in the hopes of getting discovered.

It was during one of these street sessions that Lynne realized fame wouldn’t come



Submitted photo

U.S. Army veteran and country music singer Rockie Lynne is known for supporting veterans through his music and charitable acts. He is set to perform his show, “For The Love of Country: A Salute to What Makes America Great,” 7 p.m. Sunday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center. Lynne’s visit was organized by Villagers for Veterans CEO Marie Bogdonoff on behalf of local veterans.

so easily. After watching him for awhile, a man approached Lynne and showed him that there was an easier way to play the song he was performing.

“I had that guitar for years and years, but that was the first time that guitar played music,” Lynne said. “That man played some chords on that guitar and he ran them together with little runs and all of a sudden it wasn’t just some little kid trying to play ‘Ain’t Talkin’ ‘bout Love’ — it was a man making music.”

Lynne said from that moment on, he tried to join

bands filled with experienced musicians who could teach him. That philosophy carried him all the way to Nashville, where he cut his teeth on the country music scene, and to Minnesota, where he made a name for himself. Eventually, it carried him all the way to the office of Doug Morris, former CEO of Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment. There, at 39 years old, Lynne signed his first record deal.

All of this and more, including Lynne’s discovery of his biological father, is covered in the documentary. “Rockie

Lynne: Where I Belong” is currently available on Amazon Prime.

In addition to the concert and the documentary, Lynne is the co-founder of Tribute to the Troops, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting veterans and their families.

“We get on motorcycles and we go to where that kid grew up, to where their family is and we stand in their yard and we say thank you,” Lynne said. “We thank them for their sacrifice, because every day is Memorial Day at their house.”

Since its inception, the organization has raised more than

\$1 million and helped send the children of those killed in war to college. For more information, go to tributetothetroops.org.

Villagers for Veterans will have a booth set up in The Sharon L. Performing Arts Center and will hold a raffle for a signed guitar from Lynne. The money for the raffle will go to supporting the organization’s various veterans programs.

Lynne presents “For The Love of Country” at 7 p.m. Sunday at The Sharon. Tickets start at \$45 and are buy one, get one free.

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