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Music is the literature of the heart; it commences where speech ends.

ATV trail proposed to enhance off-road recreation

Supporters claim project could boost local economies

Two members of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) are exploring the possibility of constructing a 212-mile ATV trail to link Avery, Idaho to Elk City in order to provide off-road, recreational opportunities and as a way of boosting local economies.

During a Dec. 14 meeting of the Kooskia City Council, Alex Irby and Dave Galantuomini of Public Access Year

Round (PLAY) introduced the concept of a North/South ATV Trail which would pass through Kooskia as well as several other communities lying within the Clearwater and Nez Percé national forests.

They felt the proposed trail would offer a range of recreational benefits for off-road visitors such as hik-

ing, camping and fishing. They also believed it would have a positive impact on local communities by giving them a much needed economic boost.

The two asked for support from the city council as they pursue a feasibility

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Led by the heart

CVHS grad Jason Schuster credits God for musical gift, life-changing career

By Ben Jorgensen
The Clearwater Progress

Music has always been at the heart of Jason Schuster's life, but last summer it stirred a new chord. Schuster, a 1999 graduate of Clearwater Valley High School, walked away from a great job and relatively secure life at Lewiston to pursue a music career hundreds of miles away with no guarantee of success.

So far it's been an amazing ride for this music prodigy who got his start in a high chair.

Instead of entertaining himself by pounding on piano keys, Schuster says his mother recognized his gift early on and placed him in a high chair before the piano, directing him "to play the pretty notes."

Little did he know at the time he was already cuing in on chords.

"It was obvious early on that I was learning to play by ear," said Schuster, who said it was easier to "feel the music than to look at it and redo what someone else already did."

By the second grade piano lessons were a given, but he found the whole note reading

task tedious. He preferred learning and playing by ear, which he likens to a language.

"For me with the piano it's literally like speaking a language. As long as I can remember the phrase I can play it."

And play it he did both in the high school choir and then for about 13 years for the Stiles Baptist Church, where his musical style was grounded in Christian values.

So too is his faith. "My faith

is extremely important to me," said Schuster. So much so that he willingly left a good life to pursue what he feels is God's

Neighborhood Stories
Celebrating people's life experiences one at a time

calling. "I had everything going for me. I made a good living, a great living," he said of his work at ATK in Lewiston. "I got to

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Don't Miss It
Jason Schuster will be performing at the Kooskia Opera House March 24 with keyboardist Tom.

Jason Schuster, formerly of Kooskia, recently released his album "I Believe." The accomplished pianist turned singer has embarked on a career writing and composing music in Denver.



Wind gusts top 60 mph in Clearwater Valley

An early morning storm last week was accompanied by winds gusting to more than 60 mph, tearing roofs and shingles from buildings, uprooting trees and causing scattered power outages.

Upper Clearwater Valley residents could be seen sweeping up and cleaning up Thursday morning, Dec. 28, while some were waiting for power to be restored.

A portion of the Clearwater Valley

Harvest Foods building in Kooskia was seen damaged. A tree fell on the power line near Dale and Hill's Sporting Goods along Highway 12 that contributed to a power outage there.

The Idaho County Sheriff's Department reported a couple of trees across the roadway along U.S. Highway 12 between Kooskia and Syringa. The

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Strong winds toppled trees throughout the Clearwater Valley, including this large evergreen on Sutter Creek near Kooskia.

Music

Continued from front

travel all over the country at the company's expense. I got to see things I never thought I would be able to see."

But he sensed there was some other purpose for him. "I always had a feeling that at some point God was going to ask me to do what He wants me to do and use the gift He

gave me, which is music."

Little did he know how hard it would be to quit his bread and butter job for something unknown.

As he prepared to electronically submit his two-week notice he clicked on the send button and then slid his fingers off of it. Twice.



Playing the piano comes naturally for Jason Schuster, who hopes listeners find his music encouraging.

On his third attempt to send the note he moved his fingers away again, considering the ramifications.

"At that exact moment my phone buzzed," said Schuster. A friend texted him a message from Ephesians 3:20, "we are able to do exceeding more than you or I have imagined."

"That was perfect timing," he beamed.

Before he could put the phone down it buzzed again with a message from another friend saying, "Today is your big day. Good luck today."

The coincidence of two texts at that very moment was crazy, thought Schuster.

As he started to put the phone down it buzzed a third time with a message from his former boss wishing him good luck and telling him not to "forget your goldfish," a reference to the movie *Jerry Maguire*.

It was all the confirmation Schuster needed to pursue music full time despite no immediate job, no plan, and a move to Denver where his friend Tom coaxed him to relocate.

Tom formerly worked as a DJ at the Outlaw radio station 106.9 in Lewiston. He became a vocal coach and on a whim one day asked Schuster to try out some material with him. There was just one catch. He wanted Schuster to sing.

Schuster balked. The extent of his vocal work included a song at church, at his grandmother's funeral and occasional outbursts while driving his car with his younger brother.

After much cajoling, Schuster, who said he was shaking and sweating, agreed to give it a try.

He said Tom was blown away and encouraged him to sing to others. Inspired by the event, Schuster wrote a song called "My Prayer."

Schuster tested the waters by posting the song on YouTube and Facebook. Positive feedback built up his confidence so he wrote another song, "I Believe."

The song was inspired by the Tucson, Ariz. shooting and a reality show about divorce.

From watching the reality show the concept came to mind that "we live in a world of broken promises." In his mind it sounded like a song so he scribbled out about half of it and finished it when he saw on TV the outpouring of emotion during a memorial for the shooting.

Schuster, 31, enjoys writing songs. Part of his gift includes being able to constantly hear songs or melodies in his head that can be generated from the simplest of sounds, like walking along a road. He says the process is like having a "soundtrack in his head."

Singing requires digging much deeper. Part of his guarded nature comes from watching shows like *American Idol*. Seeing people, who in their mind think they can sing well, not do well in tryouts can be a motivator to avoid the risk of embarrassment.

Schuster never pursued a music career before because he didn't feel he was good enough. But then he thought about why he was comparing himself to others.

"What I've come to realize is that nobody is just like me."

"If God wants me to be there, He has opened as many doors as I'll ever want."

"It's been a lot of fun to see."

Music has always been a passion for him but it can be a fine line between passion and work. "They always tell you when you are younger find something you love and then find a way to make money at it. That's a whole lot easier said than done."

"There is the risk of turning your passion into a job and then you don't like your passion."

For Schuster, "the American Dream isn't exactly what will make me happy. What I want is to share my music, and create music and I love playing with other musicians. It's just a lot of fun."

The fun also presents stiff challenges to his belief system. He said some have told him to be careful about

putting God or Jesus stuff in his songs because it alienates some.

"That person clearly doesn't understand who I am and what I'm doing as an artist," said Schuster.

"I want to remain true to my belief system and who I am as a person. I want my music to be positive, uplifting and encouraging."

"I want people to refer to me as a musician who is a Christian rather than a Christian musician."

Schuster's first album, *I Believe*, which was released last month, contains 10 songs. His music has been classified from soft rock to Christian and he's been compared to Josh Grubbs, which he says is a huge compliment, and Kenny Rogers.

Right now he is taking one step at a time and seeing where the path for him leads. His song "I Believe" has done very well and could place his shoulder to shoulder with musical greats.

"I remind myself very, very often how I got to where I am and why I'm doing what I'm doing," said Schuster. "It comes back to my desire to do what God wants me to do and what He has gifted me with. 'God has the wheel.'"

Strong interconnected family, including his parents Mark and Jo Schuster of Koonkia, and close friends also keep him grounded and afford him honest feedback. "Having people who will help you and tell when you are wrong and put you on the back when you are right, you can't buy that."

Schuster's music is not only written to satisfy his passion but also to help others.

"If I see someone and they have lost someone, I feel broken hearted for them. Out of my broken heart watching them go through something, whether I know them or not, I put myself in their shoes and think about what it must be like for them."

"Music helps people through a tough time."

And just as many have encouraged Schuster to pursue his passion, his belief faith reinforces the need for people to dream.

"No matter what it is if I put my mind to it and I really believe I can do this then I can."

"Knowing that I was called to do this and stepping out on faith I guess what I've learned about myself is it's not just talk."

"How can we move that you think you can if you just start doing it?"

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- Grangeville area kickoff on January 7th, 9am at Grangeville High School
- Koonkia area kickoff on January 7th, 9am at Clearwater Valley High School

Cost: \$5 individual, \$25 per team (five member max). All monies paid back as prizes.

Pre-register* and receive your program packets at Syringa Hospital & Clinic in Grangeville and Syringa Hospital's Koonkia Clinic. *You must still weigh-in on January 7th.

Contact Jo Anne Smith 208-507-0720
or joanne@syringahospital.org

www.syringahospital.org

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