

# Exchange student sings with Americana Project

By Jodi Schneider McNamee  
Correspondent

Giovanna Medola, a native of Atibaia, Brazil, dreamed of being an exchange student for years. After signing up with the foreign exchange program, taking tests and filling out forms, she finally got the opportunity to be able to meet kids from a different culture. The exchange program chose the city she would be living in — Sisters, Oregon.

Medola arrived in Sisters last September to live with her host family, guitar in tow, speaking fluent English, which is her second language, with barely a whisper of an accent of her native tongue of Portuguese.

She began her journey learning about the American culture at the start of the 2014 school year as a senior in Sisters High School.

"I learned English when I was only 5 or 6 years old, I took it in school as a second language and also took an extra class after school two times a week," Medola said. "I wanted to be an exchange student and see new cultures because my older brother told me that it was the best experience of his life when he did it. I was only 8 years old and I never forgot."

Since Medola has played the acoustic guitar since she was 12, her host family mother, Adrienne Banks, thought the Americana Project at Sisters High School might be something that she would benefit from.

"When I first started the Americana class I was in cycle one for beginners, but since I already knew the guitar, it was pretty easy for me. Then on the third week, our teacher, Mr. Johnson was walking around and really

listened to me play, and instructed me to play and sing any song that I wanted for my next test," Medola said. "So I performed my own version of 'YMCA,' by the Village People that I have played in Brazil. It went well, and then I got to play in front of the whole school at the Americana Assembly with about 26 other students!"

Medola got the chance to take her musical skills to another level by writing three songs.

"The Americana classes helped me so much. I learned how to compose my own songs and I made many friends. Plus, I cannot believe you can get a credit for playing the guitar," Medola said. "The classes at my high school in Brazil are mostly academic."

One of Medola's original songs will be recorded on the next album produced by the Americana Project students; it will be their 12th album since 2003 and will be released in May 2015.

"I'm excited that an exchange student got to participate in self-expression for youth, and with American roots music," said Brad Tisdell, executive director of the Sisters Folk Festival, which oversees the Americana Project in partnership with Sisters schools. "She's the first student to record a song that is half English and half Portuguese."

In September, Medola also signed up with the Sisters cross-country team.

"I'm not much of a sports person, but I can run, and I wanted to make friends," Medola said. "Everyone was super nice and we had lots of fun running the races."

However, there were a couple of things that didn't



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Giovanna Medola thinks The Americana Project is "the coolest thing ever."

come quite so naturally to the friendly 17-year-old senior.

"U.S. history was so hard for me to conquer, but I did it," Medola said. "And one thing I can't get use to is the cold weather. In Brazil it is warm all the time, year 'round. Each day it seemed to get a little colder in Sisters and I don't understand how it doesn't bother anyone. But, it was nice to see snow for the first time."

Medola has adapted well

to life at Sisters High School.

"Our school year in Brazil is from February to November and there is more pressure in the last year of high school and very hard tests to take," Medola said. "I feel more open-minded from this experience and I think I could adjust to any culture."

"I have never been happier than with the Americana Project," she added. "It's the coolest thing ever."

*Explore... Mixed Media*

392 W. Main Ave., #3  
*(Across from Bright Spot)*  
541-588-0931  
*A creative place to call your own!*

*Looking for Your Dental Home?*

**Advantage Dental Clinics**  
354 West Adams  
Sisters, OR  
97759

**888-468-0022 ext. 840**  
**www.AdvantageDental.com**

*Emergencies, most Insurance Plans and Oregon Health Plan Patients are all welcome.*  
*Some level of treatment financing is available to everyone.*

**THE GALLERY**  
RESTAURANT AND BAR

*Hot off the griddle!*  
Serving the best  
Rancher Breakfast  
for over 35 years.

**Fresh Grits!**  
Cooked up  
every morning!

Breakfast & lunch 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Full-service dining in the bar  
nightly until 10 p.m. (21 & over)  
171 W. Cascade Ave., Sisters | 541-549-2631

SISTERS FOLK FESTIVAL  
WINTER CONCERT SERIES  
2015

-FEB 6-  
**FOGHORN STRINGBAND**  
OPENING SET  
BY BETH WOOD

-FEB 13-  
**THE STRAY BIRDS & CAHALEN MORRISON AND ELI WEST**

-FEB 27-  
**WILLY PORTER & CARMEN NICKERSON**

SISTERS HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM  
ALL SHOWS 7PM

SERIES TICKET (ALL SHOWS)  
\$50 / \$25 STUDENT (18 & UNDER)  
INDIVIDUAL SHOWS  
ADVANCE \$20 / DOOR \$25  
STUDENT \$10

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT  
SISTERSFOLKFESTIVAL.ORG/TICKETS  
CALL 541.549.4979 OR

**BENDticket.com**