

FUNK: Singer moved to Nashville in 2018 to pursue music career

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is still on, just starting down a new path. In September of 2016, she announced she was going to make a country album in Oregon. Shortly after that, Funk suffered a brain aneurism, forcing her to have brain surgery. Everything was put on hold for six months during her recovery time.

“Six months after surgery I still wanted to do an album, I just had to figure out how to get there,” she said.

Central Oregon local AJ Kross, who had connections in Nashville, knew of Funk’s story and set her up with a few writers in Nashville. So, throughout 2017, she was going back and forth between Sisters and Nashville, writing and recording as much of her content as she could. In 2018, on her birthday, she made the move to Nashville.

Funk works in restaurants and grocery stores to pay the bills and make her way there.

“There is a saying in Nashville when you say you’re a singer-songwriter, they ask you what restaurant you work in,” she said. “Everyone in Nashville is trying to make it and all striving after the goal of getting a deal, so this is a dream come true for me.”

Funk begins recording her new EP in mid-January. She describes her music as Americana/country/rock. She says that her music and sound has gone through stages — she started out more Christian, then into more storytelling songs and now she writes songs that are



PHOTO BY KAYLEE STEFFE

Rhonda Funk is pursuing a dream in Nashville.

based on life experiences.

“I have honed my sound more and more, and I can feel it changing and I have learned from other people,” she said.

Funk plans to write more and tour more dates in 2020. Just in 2019, she’s written or co-written 100 songs, performed 90 dates in six states, and she’s just getting started. Her most recent successes include a newly co-written Christmas song, “Holiday With You,” cut by country music great T. Graham Brown and Claudette King, the daughter of blues legend B.B. King.

Funk plans to tour in the next couple of months around the western U.S., including a date in Sisters. She will be playing Chops Bistro on February 29, and Crux Brewery in Bend on February 28. She will be touring around Oregon and Washington for a month and a half and plans to bring some of her newly recorded music with her. Her EP will be made available for purchase in advance before it is released on music streaming platforms.

LEADERS: Statewide organization has grassroots base

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to resources, education, cultural background, ability, citizenship, race, gender, sexual orientation, and more all affect what kinds of opportunities for success and quality of life are available to a person.”

Mejia-Botero is a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient, sometimes called a Dreamer. She aims to use her “privileges and resources to open up more opportunities for others.” In collaboration with Madras fellow Rossy Valdovino-Torres, she helped build a club for Dreamers, immigrant students, and allies at Central Oregon Community College during her fellowship year.

Jaylyn Suppah was another winner. A member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, she lives on the Warm Springs reservation, where she is a community planner and an elected member of the Education Committee of the Tribe.

Suppah spearheaded Awareness Through Art workshops “to help people who are struggling to recover from addictions or a sentence for some type of criminal conviction to reflect on family and tribal history and culture.” Artistic reflections

allow them to grow, learn, and “move differently in the world going forward,” with the support of the local judge, probation workers, and community volunteers.

ROP is a statewide organization with a rural-centered, grassroots base working on a variety of issues. “We work to build and support a shared standard of human dignity,” the organization states. It defines this as belief in the equal worth of all people, the need for equal access to justice, and the right to self-determination.

The organization’s mission is to “strengthen the skills, resources, and vision of primary leadership in

local autonomous human dignity groups with a goal of keeping such groups a vibrant source for a just democracy.”

Central Oregon PFLAG, Central Oregon Jobs with Justice, KPOV 88.9 FM/High Desert Community Radio, the Peace and Justice Team at First Presbyterian Church, and Jefferson Positive Action Group are among its regional network partners.

Fellowship applications are available at <https://rop.org/our-work/rural-organizing-fellowship>. Additional questions may be directed to Hannah Harrod at fellowship@rop.org or 541-802-6020.



PHOTO PROVIDED

The 2018-2019 Rural Organizing Fellows meet to strategize with labor organizers at Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, a Latino union.

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