

**MUSIC VIDEO from page 1A**

She and her parents are social media savvy, encouraging “likes” on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, where she goes by the handle “Nyah the Unicorn.” She is currently enrolled in online classes for her freshman year of high school.

Scott told the council, “We want to get as many people, as many Florence faces, as possible. Our main objective is really to showcase our home town. We want you to be in it.”

“Everybody here is invited,” Nyah said.

The Vollmars have lived in Florence for the past seven years — “the longest I’ve ever lived anywhere,” Nyah said. In that time, they have been active in extracurricular activities for their four children.

“I do a lot of stuff with CROW (Children’s Repertory of Oregon Workshops) and I like to sing for a lot of the different events in town,” Nyah said. “I also sing the National Anthem for the Ducks

and the Trailblazers.”

Her work on stage began before the family moved to Florence, but CROW and Last Resort Players (LRP) gave the young performer her first real moments in the spotlight.

“The whole reason I got into acting and singing in the first place is I’m a big Disney fan,” Nyah said. “When I was little, I wanted to be a Disney princess, and they sing and stuff. So I started singing and acting. When I heard CROW was doing ‘Beauty and the Beast’ as a play, I got really excited.”

She was in the ensemble for Florence productions by CROW and LRP, such as “Joseph and the Technicolor Dream Coat” and “The Music Man.” Then she started to get speaking parts, as Flounder in “The Little Mermaid” and as Gavroche in “Les Misérables.”

But she didn’t get cast in “Sound of Music” — which led to her placing as a semifinalist in Southern Oregon’s Got Talent that year.

“Nyah was really bummed that she didn’t get cast in that, since a bunch of her friends did,” said her mother Marijo. “It was one of those ‘make lemonade out of lemons’ moments, because she got told ‘no.’ ... Being told ‘no,’ she could have taken that personally, but it was a turning point for Nyah in a sense, because she changed her game a lot. Now, she’s like, ‘People are going to tell me no, but I’m going to do something about it.’”

That eventually led to Nyah singing the National Anthem for Viking games and, later that year, the University of Oregon Ducks. She has since continued to sing for games and be part of various other productions, even singing the anthem in front of 20,000 people at Portland’s Moda Center for a Trail Blazers game.

“Florence is an interesting community because I feel like you don’t get told ‘no’ here,” Marijo continued. “If there is something you want to do as a young person, or even a person

my age, like, ‘Oh, I want to take hula lessons,’ Boom! There’s a place to do it here. ‘I want to record something.’ Well, she’s been in two recording studios here in this town.

“If you have a dream, or you have a goal, there is a way to realize it in this community, which is not typical for a lot of small communities.”

Scott and Marijo can trace Nyah’s interest in singing back to when she was very young. They worried that moving away from the larger metropolitan areas of Portland would limit the choices that their children might have for the arts.

Marijo said they were already committed to driving her to either Eugene or Portland for more opportunities — and then people told them about CROW. Still, she was skeptical all the way up until “Beauty and the Beast” opened.

“I saw it on the main stage, and I think everybody was surprised,” Marijo said. “I don’t think people understand how

great CROW is.”

Both Nyah and her 8-year-old brother Jonah take classes in acting, modeling and singing, starting first with CROW and with local vocal coach Jason Wood.

“Now, when our kids go up to Portland for classes, they’re ready,” Marijo added.

Opportunities in Portland led the Vollmars to InRage Entertainment, led by husband-and-wife duo Bruce “Automatic” Vanderveer and Ebony Rae Vanderveer, who were looking for possible performers for a Korean-influenced band. While Nyah could not speak Korean, her audition video caught their eye.

“I quickly realized her intensity in knowing her craft, the unique tone of her voice and an ease and joy that exudes from her when she sings,” said Alexandra Blackbird, executive director of artists and repertoire at InRage.

Nyah signed with InRage in January. Less than a year later, and with monthly trips to Los Angeles for vocal studies with Ebony, Nyah has recorded her first song, “Empty Spaces.”

“I would say it’s a mix between pop and alternative,” she said. “I wrote my own lyrics. The people down at InRage produced the instrumentals.”

“Through InRage’s development program, our goal is to help talented people of any age help bring out the best of what is inside them,” Automatic said. “We try our best to understand who the artist is and where it is they want to go with their career. We don’t force them to become something they’re not; we take their natural gifts and add our expertise so that they develop into someone they themselves can be proud of.”

The Vollmars valued that InRage wanted to help Nyah “figure out her music” and keep her individuality.

“InRage wants to create musicians who contribute to the legacy of music. That was an interesting concept for us, since they were really interested in Nyah as an artist, and not a product,” Marijo said. “It was nice because they weren’t expecting production right away.”

While the entertainment group’s normal model includes two years to create five songs, Marijo said that Nyah should have those complete in 2019.

Nyah said she writes about her own experiences.

“‘Empty Spaces’ is mainly about how humans have really short lives,” she said. “You might as well live like you’re making the best out of 80 or so years.”

Her parents think the song has universal appeal, something that was echoed by the team at InRage.

“When they listened to her track, they said this was more universal than a teeny-bopper song,” Marijo said. “It’s not cookie cutter. There’s an evolution. It’s really fun to work with people who can see that she is a young person, but a person in her own right. She has a message to say that is more than a cookie cutter statement.”

“I am consistently impressed with the level of and quality of songs Nyah writes,” Ebony, who is vice president of InRage, said. “Her vocal tone and her vibe is really dope and she has a natural gift for creating, much like one of the greatest songwriters right now, Sia. And she’s only 14! ... With Nyah, and a few of our other artists, we realized that it doesn’t make sense to sit on good music when it’s ready to go! So, we sped up the timeline.”

The next step is to make a video for her music — and for the Vollmars, it was easy to pick a location: Nyah’s hometown, Florence, Ore., which is a bit far for the production teams from Portland and Los Angeles. Besides InRage, Nyah has worked extensively with Katie O’Grady, who will direct the video.

“If you want to see the quality of work the production teams do ... we have the best we could find,” Scott said.

He listed other artists who filmed music videos in their hometowns, including Justin Timberlake and Nelly.

“It just brought out a lot of

places in the community in trying to showcase that community,” he said. “That’s what Nyah wants to do with her first song.”

Marijo agreed. “We all knew this needed to be here,” she said. “This needs to come to Florence specifically. First, it’s magical here. You do a 360-spin-the-bottle, and you’re going to find something gorgeous to look at. ... The other part about it is that this is a really unique community.”

Nyah said she has lived other places and traveled a lot — especially recently.

“This is definitely my favorite right here,” she said.

“Florence could easily be a town you drive through on the 101, but if you don’t live here, you don’t understand the community,” Marijo continued. “It made a lot of sense to us to bring it home, because we want everybody who helped bring her to this place to be included in the process. It was really important that it happen.”

That includes the cast and supporting people from Nyah’s time in dance and acting, as well as the people at the Daughters of the American Revolution, Florence Elks Lodge 1858, the Rhododendron Court, Oregon Coast Military Museum, Siuslaw schools and more.

“A lot of people have helped me,” Nyah said. “Everywhere they have let me sing has helped me improve my performance, my vocal technique and my fear of crowds.”

“It just keeps on going and going. Again, you could spin that bottle, and you’d be pointing at someone who contributed in some way to where she is today,” Marijo added.

One of Florence’s taglines in recent years has been “Come see what we see,” an invitation for people to take in the sights, adventure on the dunes, shop in Historic Old Town and just generally experience the area the way that the city, the Florence Area Chamber of Commerce and area businesses do.

The Vollmars said that they, too, hope to invite people in.

“What’s fun is that people want to come,” Marijo said. “They’re interested. We had a certain vision with this particular project, and then having the community support is a big part of it. I just feel like this place is magic. There’s a community here that supports kids.”

This includes other youth, such as the Siuslaw High School Viking Hour at KCST Coast Radio on Monday, where Nyah was interviewed by students. Last school year, her school friends Ramiro Ramirez and Hannah Rasmussen worked with her on another video project.

On Saturday, participants will meet at the Port of Siuslaw Boardwalk near ICM Restaurant at 10 a.m. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate for the shooting schedule, which will send Nyah through Old Town, to the beach and to other areas around town.

“I know that (the production team) is going to bring a tremendous product. What’s going to be fun is seeing that community love on the big screen,” Marijo said. “CROW and Flight Dance Team are going to be in it too. All the loves will be there. And it’s not just going to end Saturday. There’s going to be the single to release and the music video.”

There will be a red-carpet release of the completed video at the Florence Events Center on Saturday, Feb. 16.

“For us, and it’s like Nyah says in her song, you only get one go-round. If you don’t believe in yourself, who is going to believe in you? ... If you want to do this, we’ll do it. We’ll see where this takes us,” Marijo said.

What’s next for Nyah? Performing a duet with Marijo in the Holly Jolly Follies “Starlight” from Nov. 30 to Dec. 2 and auditioning for next year’s “The Wiz” with CROW and maybe even LRP’s “Mama Mia.” She is ready to try anything at least once, and she is willing to work toward her goals. She is truly going places — but Florence will always be her home town.

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