LIVING
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'Southland' returns to TV tonight, 4C

WITH TV / COMICS

DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS — CHRIS DUNN
Kayla Kroh, 14, of Manchester Township sings 'Someone Like You' as her music teacher Heather Sneeringer plays guitar Jan. 6 at Central Market in York.

At home on stage

DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS — CHRIS DUNN
Local musician and music teacher Heather Sneeringer, far right, tunes her guitar as her students Kayla Kroh, Maria Lytle and Kortney Kroh watch. Sneeringer started the performance-based group Homegrown in the fall to get her students in front of local audiences.

Students branch out in performance-based group

By ERIN McCRACKEN
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Despite her blond curls and porcelain complexion, Kayla Kroh was a target.

The Manchester Township teen suffered from ADHD and her classmates picked on her.

She sought refuge with music by Miranda Lambert, Reba McEntire and Jessie J.

In 2010, Kayla started voice lessons with Heather Sneeringer. She channeled her hurt feelings into an original song titled "Two-faced."

Her message to others: "Don't let anger change who you are."

Kayla, her 12-year-old sister, Kortney, and about 15 other aspiring musicians take lessons with Sneeringer. The performer majored in music, began teaching voice lessons in 1998 and is part of the duo Copper Sky.

Sneeringer plays weekly shows, but most of her students only get exposure through small recitals. They needed to branch out, she said.

Bars and restaurants aren't always the best venues for adolescents, so Sneeringer reached out to friends and music contacts in the area to help them book gigs. She named the performance-based group Homegrown.

"I guess it's grassroots," Sneeringer said. "They're local kids who are sprouting talent."

The owners of Bair's Fried Chicken in Central Market — friends of Sneeringer's — agreed to stage Homegrown performances, the first of which was during York Bike Night in September. The response was promising, so students were booked at subsequent First Fridays. They sign up for live shows at their music lessons.

Sneeringer wants her pupils to play for strangers so they develop stage presence and learn how to deal with equipment malfunctions and other distractions. She wants them to be fearless.

She also wants them to be songwriters. She helps her students, who range in age from 7 to 50, learn how to accompany themselves on guitar and piano.

"Some of the ones who have the best talent are the shiest," Sneeringer said. "Sensitive kids get bullied. Good writers usually are the most sensitive."

DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS — CHRIS DUNN
Chris Reichat of Manchester Township records video of her daughter Annie, 12, performing during the Homegrown showcase Jan. 6 at Central Market in York.

In the future, Sneeringer wants the group to book more venues and attract performers beyond her classes.

"There are good middle school and high school music (programs) in Lancaster and York," she said. "There are wonderful teachers out there."

That means there are many talented students in theater programs, choirs and ensembles, she added.

Kayla has come a long way. In addition to Homegrown, she's performed in talent shows and at benefit events, and she's recorded songs in a studio. She's learning how to play guitar.

On Jan. 6, Sneeringer strummed the six-string as Kayla sang to about 20 people gathered around tables next to Bair's Fried Chicken. They picked at fries, slurped soda and politely applauded after songs.

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Hear Homegrown:

- 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday at Central Market, 34 W. Philadelphia St., York.
- First Fridays Feb. 3 and March 2 at Bair's Fried Chicken in Central Market.
- 7 to 10 p.m. every Wednesday through March 7 during the open mike at Roundtop Mountain Resort, 25 Roundtop Road, Warrington Township.
- 7 p.m. March 16 at Badog Music, 60 Glen Drive, Manchester Township.

Online

- Details about Heather Sneeringer: www.copperskyband.com
- Read a 2009 interview with Copper Sky: www.flipsidepa.com/musicdirectory
- Check out more First Friday events: downtownyorkpa.com/first-fridays

devotion to cleanliness

DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS — CHRIS DUNN
Music teacher and performer Heather Sneeringer helps her student Maria Lytle, 17, of Springfield Township, with her guitar during the Jan. 6 Homegrown showcase at Central Market in York. Sneeringer has taught music lessons for about 14 years.

Stage

Homegrown acts as 'an outlet to get away from the drama.'

Continued from 1C

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Taylor Lentz, 14, played guitar and sang a tune she wrote for her mom.

Taylor, who has been taking lessons since fifth grade, said her biggest challenge while performing used to be nerves. Now, it's memorizing the material. One day, she hopes to be a music teacher.

Maria Lytle, 17, stepped up to the mike next and performed Radiohead and Bob Dylan covers.

Her mom, Delma, said Maria's always been into music, but blossomed while working with Sneeringer in the past year.

"They all aspire to be like Heather," she said. Each song was amplified, thanks to the Krohs' new sound equipment — a Christmas present from their grandparents. They plan to lend it to Homegrown events in the future since most of the other performers are now good friends.

"We hang out," Kayla said. "(Homegrown is) like a family. It's an outlet to get away from the drama and relax and have fun."

"We make people happy," Kortney echoed as she waited to see if her mom would let her perform despite a sore throat.

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