

## Troubled teens tap into power of music

BY MATT COOPER

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One would assume a 17-year-old who felt depressed and inferior wouldn't be caught dead on stage, a guitar in her arms and an audience before her.

But that's the transformative power of music for you.

Nichoel Wright used to be that kid. But thanks to a music mentorship program for teens in need, Wright has discovered a wave of artistic expression that she plans to ride right into college.

She was one of three teens who celebrated the release of their own CD Sunday at west Eugene's Looking Glass Station 7, a shelter for youths in crisis. The project brings social service and cultural organizations together around a goal: using music and mentors to teach kids and teens to be successful, at anything.

"Music has been a bridge for young people for a long time," said Jesse Klemmer, 33, a guitarist and program instructor. "They have a tendency to be going through heavy things emotionally, and music reflects that. It seems to make an impact for them."

Teens typically arrive at Station 7 from abusive situations, often involving their families, said Bob Clayton of the music mentorship program, Acchord. Shelter workers counsel them and seek family reconciliation.

Acchord and Station 7 are using a community arts grant from the Lane Arts Council and Eugene's cultural services division to provide volunteer instructors and free lessons to teens who have used shelter services and are passionate about music.

Youths who complete the program get an instrument; since 2000, more than 600 lessons have been provided and 18 teens have earned an instrument.

Sunday's three performers - Wright, Richard Germiller, 19, and Lucas Hubbard, 15, all of Eugene - started on the CD, "Perrywinkle Moonshine," in February.

Wright, who plans to study art at Lane Community College, fought an intense case of the butterflies Sunday to sing solemnly about broken hearts and twisted souls, scrunching her face at misplayed notes.



**Nichoel Wright, 17 (left), Richard Germiller, 19, and Lucas Hubbard, 15, perform Sunday at Looking Glass Station 7, a shelter for youths in crisis.**

WAYNE EASTBURN  
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She disarmed the crowd with her lighthearted banter, but at least one exchange hinted at troubles to which many teens can relate.

"My dad didn't show up," she said, between songs.

"It's OK, neither did mine!" Hubbard answered, sitting close by.

Hubbard later described his relationship with his father, with whom he has little interaction: "It's like we're on two sides of a window," he said. "But it's bullet-proof glass."

Hubbard sang a bold version of the folk ballad classic "The House of the Rising Sun" and displayed an impressive command of guitar techniques. "Before this program, I couldn't even make an E chord," he said later.

Germiller closed the show, entertaining the crowd with a cleverly biting song about unruly fans at University of Oregon football games. The opening line: "Home team's got a game this weekend, football season starts in fall/Can already tell this'll be a good season, fans are strapped and ready to brawl."

The show was especially pleasing for Hubbard's mother, Yvonne. She opens up her home for band practice and helps her son shop for music equipment - both valuable inroads into his world, she said. "The program really gave Lucas a direction, and an opportunity for me to be part of his life," she said.

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#### HEAR THE MUSIC

"**Perrywinkle Moonshine**," a CD by three teens from Looking Glass Station 7, is available at [www.musicmentorship.org](http://www.musicmentorship.org) for a donation of \$20 or more. Volunteer musicians and musical equipment are needed. Call 689-3111.