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### Six-time Grammy Award winner Amy Grant to speak, perform at Casa de Amor Gala

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**Lakendra Lewis** Corpus Christi Caller Times

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CORPUS CHRISTI — From the moment she came on the scene as a teenager, Amy Grant has been breaking new ground in both Christian and secular music, paving the way for every artist whose come after her to seamlessly bridge the gap between Gospel and mainstream.

The recipient of more than 20 Gospel Music Association Dove Awards, Grant was the first Contemporary Christian artist to have an album go platinum, the first to successfully crossover to the Pop charts with a No. 1 single, and the first to perform at the Grammy's.

Most people can sing the words to at least one of her many chart-topping songs — "Baby, Baby," "Breath of Heaven," "Better Than a Hallelujah" and "El Shaddai," just to name a few — and many know Grant also is a mother of five, an author, a television star and wife to Country music star, Vince Gill.

But what most might not know about the woman who has been called "The Queen of Christian of Pop" is that she also is a sought-after speaker.

"Over the years I have been asked to speak more often. I think it's because people remember stories and songwriting is really stories," Grant said during a recent conference call.

The six-time Grammy Award-winning superstar will serve as guest speaker for the 2012 Casa de Amor gala benefiting the Ronald McDonald House of Corpus Christi on Wednesday at the American Bank Center.

Now in its 10th year, the gala boasts more than 800 guests annually and is the largest fundraising event for the Ronald McDonald House, which provides comfort, safety and advocacy in a homelike environment for families of ill children who must travel to the area to fulfill their health care needs.

Proceeds from the gala will help support the organization's operational expenses, such as providing meals, lodging, laundry facilities and other services.

Grant is slated mainly to speak but will most likely intersperse her talk with performances of some of her well-known Christian and Pop tunes.

"When I arrive .... what I'll bring is a collection of stories I think might be appropriate to the occasion," said Grant, who is currently on the road touring musically on her own and as a featured speaker with Women of Faith. "Based on the people I meet, I'll try to just sort of spontaneously weave together a unique evening. And of course, I always bring my guitar because if I draw a blank I'll just default to a song."

In addition to Grant, the gala will honor the Charles Kaffie family, and include live and silent auctions featuring 25 acoustic guitars signed by Grant, as well as the singer's best-selling autobiographical memoir, "Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far."

Grant's appearance puts her among a star-studded list of past Casa de Amor celebrity guest speakers that includes Joan Rivers, Jenna Bush and Naomi Judd.

"We want to bring artists and entertainers who get our mission and will have an impact in the community," said Mark Avelar, executive director for the Ronald McDonald House. "We like them to speak from the heart and bring their own incite."

Grant will arrive early the day of the gala to tour the Ronald McDonald House and meet some of its families to give her an idea of how the charity operates, Avelar said.

Casa de Amor in Spanish means "house of love," an apt fit for Grant, who performed a duet on a 1994 song of the same title with Gill.

Grant remains the best-selling contemporary Christian music singer ever, having sold more than 30 million units worldwide. Her last album, "Somewhere Down the Road," was released in 2010.

Grant is working on a new album she hopes to have in stores next spring. She said she hasn't yet determined what type of album it will be.

"Right now I'm just going into the studio with my guitar," said Grant, 51. "At this point I don't have any desire to compete for center stage in the Pop arena, that's for the young. I'm just interested in writing songs that articulate some specific, human experience."

If You Go

What: 2012 Casa de Amor Gala featuring Amy Grant

Where: American Bank Center, 1901 N. Shoreline Blvd.

When: 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday; (VIP reception with Grant starts at 5:30 p.m.)

Cost: \$150/individual ticket; \$250/VIP ticket; sponsorships available

Information: 854-4073 or [corpuschristirmhc.org](http://corpuschristirmhc.org)

Through the years

1977: Releases debut album, "Amy Grant," one month before her high school graduation.

1988: The album "Lead Me On" is voted No. 1 contemporary Christian music of all time in a poll taken by Contemporary Christian Music Magazine.

1991: The album "Heart in Motion," featuring the hit singles "Baby, Baby," and "Every Heartbeat" cracks the Top Billboard 200 and also is named No. 1 on the Christian charts for 32 weeks.

1992: Chosen as one of People magazine's 50 most people beautiful in the world.

2005: Awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for her contributions to the entertainment industry.

2007: Autobiography, "Mosaic: Pieces of My Heart," debuts on New York Times best-seller list.

2010: "Somewhere Down the Road," Grant's 22nd studio album, is released, featuring the song "Overnight," a duet recorded with her daughter, Sarah Chapman.

**Caption: Contributed Photo**

**Six-time Grammy Award-winning performer Amy Grant will serve as guest speaker for the 2012 Casa de Amor Gala benefiting the Ronald McDonald House of Corpus Christi on Wednesday, Sept. 12 at the American Bank Center.**

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