

Caller Times

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Let freedom ring, let McBride shine

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Country music superstar Martina McBride, a four-time Country Music Association Female Vocalist of the Year, is planning her first stop in Corpus Christi on Thursday at the American Bank Center.

McBride and Texas country artist Kevin Fowler will perform as part of an annual fundraiser to benefit South Texas Academic Rising Scholars, a nonprofit organization that provides scholarships to South Texas students to help them attend the college or university of their choice.

The singer-songwriter's performance in Corpus Christi will mark the end of the second leg of a five-city limited engagement for her Shine All Night tour.

McBride has been on the road off and on since last November to promote her latest studio album, "Shine," a collection of songs the country music diva says convey a lot of emotion.

"They're songs about recovery, abuse and looking at the bright side of things," McBride said in a phone interview. "I try to look for songs that have emotions my fans can connect with."

Jennifer Brockette, a Corpus Christi native who has been a fan since the beginning of McBride's career, views the singer as her role model.

"I went to see [Martina] on my birthday at WinStar (World) Casino...," Brockette said. "It is fitting since she is amazing and a huge inspiration to me. I got two of the best birthday presents ever. Nothing will ever top that."

McBride was honored by the compliment.

"It's interesting how much music is part of people's lives and I think we all have music that's made a difference to us. It makes me feel good to be a part of people's memories," she said.

After 18 years and 10 albums, McBride still is very much a part of her fans' lives through her music and her charity work.

The mother of three daughters ages 16, 12 and 5, McBride has been an advocate against domestic violence for the past several years and was awarded the Minnie Pearl Humanitarian Award in 2003. She is the spokeswoman for the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the My Time to Shine program, which raises awareness about domestic violence.

"When I recorded 'Independence Day,' it made take a look at domestic violence and the epidemic it is in this world, and I wanted to do something to help stop it," she said.

As for her future endeavors, McBride is planning a new album in the fall. She finds her process for finding and writing songs cathartic.

"It's like a blank canvas," she said. "You just hear songs that you're drawn to and they start taking shape. I let the songs speak to me and that's how I find out what I want to say in my writing."

When she's not on the road or in the studio, McBride enjoys reading, going to the movies and entertaining friends at home.

"If I hadn't gone into music, I'd probably be a caterer or a party planner," she said. "It's just another way to show my creativity and show people how much I care about them."

If you goWhat: South Texas

Academic Rising Scholars presents Martina McBride and Kevin Fowler

When: 8:30 p.m. Thursday Where: American Bank Center arena, 1901 North Shoreline Blvd.

Cost:\$26.50 - \$61.50

and are available at the American Bank Center

box office, all Ticketmaster outlets or charge by phone at 1-800-745-3000

What is South Texas Academic Rising Scholars or STARS?The organization was

established in October

2002 by L&F Distributors, a local company that handles Budweiser products, with the goal of making higher education accessible to the students of South Texas.

How much do students get?

*Scholarship awards vary and range

from \$350 to \$3,500.* More than \$3 million has been raised for

scholarships this year* 6,000 scholarships will be awarded to students in

Corpus Christi, Laredo and the Rio Grande Valley

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