

Shevy Smith

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

May 1, 2014. The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences is announcing its nominations for the Emmys. One of those who is recognized is a young woman from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Shevy Smith is a singer-songwriter in California. Last week we met her brother Craig Smith, an assistant professor of agribusiness at Fort Hays State University. She and her brothers grew up together on the family farm near the rural community of Haven, population 1,172 people. Now, that's rural.

"We had a great music program at Haven," Shevy said. "Mrs. Henks had a show choir called Haven Harmony."

But Shevy did not gravitate toward music immediately. "I had two older brothers who didn't care for choir, so I tried to pretend it wasn't cool," Shevy said. "But as I got into it, I found I loved singing."

Shevy took piano lessons from Mrs. Henks and also learned guitar. Soon she was being selected to do solos at school and church. "The people in our community were so encouraging," Shevy said. "They would let me have thirty minutes on stage to perform at local festivals."

Shevy also applied the work ethic she had learned in rural Kansas to her budding musical career. "I would come home from school and spend five hours a night writing songs," she said.

Soon this gifted young artist became noticed. She performed for the inauguration of Governor Bill Graves which led to a contact in the New York music business.

She went to New York and then got publishing deals with labels and worked with producers in Nashville. By age 19, she was touring on the road, doing two hundred shows a year. "One year I hit 47 states," Shevy said. Wow.

"Looking back, it seems crazy that I was doing all that at that age," Shevy said. "They put me in studios with phenomenal musicians and recording engineers. They took a chance on me and really taught me how to produce records. It was the best training I could have had," she said.

She even went on USO tours to Afghanistan and Iraq. "It was a chance to see the world," Shevy said.

But by 2008, she was ready for a change from the rigors of the road, and she wanted to branch out in her music. "My music is not necessarily in the country realm," Shevy said. She made the move to the west coast and continued her musical career as a singer, songwriter and producer in southern California. "I enjoy working with all types of music," Shevy said. "I'm now producing a pop artist, writing for a grungy band, and doing promotional projects."

She had the opportunity to join a creative team as a composer on a project for ABC. "I'm now on my fourth project with them," she said. "It's so fun and so collaborative." One project was even nominated for a Daytime Emmy award.

Shevy has a heart for others. She is working with the Afghan Women's Writing Project in which poems from Afghan women are adapted into original songs. She hopes to take this program overseas. "People need to feel that their voice matters," Shevy said. "We need to bring joy and ease suffering in the world."

She is also mentoring students close to home. Shevy started teaching private music lessons in California as a temporary measure but found that she relished it. Her education

company started with the name Girls With Guitars but has grown in scope. The company is now known as Forte Poesy and serves more than 50 teenagers. “I love helping others articulate their musical talents,” Shevy said.

She also has a message of hope for students back home in Kansas: “You don’t have to live in the big city or the entertainment capitol,” Shevy said. “Small town kids should know, with hard work it’s as possible for them (to have success in the music business) as anybody else.”

May 1, 2014. The nominations for the Daytime Emmy awards include a gifted singer-songwriter from rural Kansas. We commend Shevy Smith for making a difference with her musical talents, and especially, her heart for others. Mrs. Henks would be proud. For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.