



CASI

JOY MCCALL, '12

The **Promising Young Professional Award** recognizes Park University alumni who show exceptional promise of leadership and contribution to their profession and/or community.



Casi Joy's new album "Love On Repeat."

"I started singing when I was 5 years old — and I was terrible," said Casi Joy McCall, '12, who, after winning the attention of country singer Blake Shelton on NBC's "The Voice," is now touring the country to promote her new solo album.

"Even my family will tell you I was a terrible singer," she said. "But it's what I've always wanted to do. Music is my North Star."

When she was around 10 years old, McCall (who goes by the stage name Casi Joy) said her parents, Kay and Scott McCall, started to notice "something going on" with her blossoming talent. They've since been her biggest cheerleaders. "We lived in hotel rooms nearly every weekend when I was in middle school on the Midwest Opry circuit," she said. "My parents gave up so much to help me chase my dream," McCall said. "You hear it all the time, but it's true. No matter what, never ever give up on your dreams."

SACRIFICE AND DETERMINATION

Music, sports, music — that was McCall's world growing up in Smithville, Mo. "College was never on my mind," she said. McCall, who comes from a family of teachers, said something came over her in high school. "Despite my music dreams, I wanted to go to college, and when Park offered me a track scholarship, I decided to go for it," she said.

"I loved my degree program and everyone at Park, which helped me apply myself and earn my bachelor's degree in early childhood education. I even graduated with honors!" she said. "It took a lot of sacrifice and determination — it does for everyone — but I knew if I just stuck with it, I'd never regret it."

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While at Park, McCall used her teaching skills working at the School of Rock, a music school in Parkville, Mo., where she taught voice, piano and guitar for seven years. She also developed new curriculum for Little Wing, the school's program for 3 to 5 year olds.

Watching her perform on stage, it's hard to imagine McCall was ever afraid of public speaking. "I'd sing one song after another and wouldn't stop and talk to the audience because I was terrified. A public speaking class at Park helped me overcome my fears," she said. "Now I can't seem to shut up on stage. I love talking to the crowd and I owe that to Park."

BITE THE BULLET

After graduation, McCall decided to get serious about music. "If I was ever going to make my dream a reality, I had to bite the bullet and go to Nashville," she said. On New Year's Day in 2015, McCall packed her bags for the Music City. Since then, the vibrant songbird has opened for Brad Paisley, Rascal Flatts, Chaka Khan and others.

In February, McCall's career took a giant leap when she auditioned for Season 12 of NBC's "The Voice," singing LeAnn Rimes' "Blue." Her yodel caught the attention of all four celebrity judges who quickly turned their chairs around, signaling a thumbs-up vote for McCall on the reality TV singing competition franchise.

While on tour this fall to release her debut album, "Love on Repeat," McCall finds time to make another dream come true. With a thick binder near her guitar, McCall is planning a big family wedding to marry her high school friend-turned-fiancé, Bryan Lankford, on Oct. 14.

When she returns to visit family, McCall wows the hometown crowd singing the National Anthem for the Kansas City Royals, Kansas City Chiefs and Sporting Kansas City.

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Casi Joy singing the national anthem at Arrowhead Stadium.



Casi Joy with a few of her country music fans.