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Rocco the teen jazz singer kicks off Reading Fair

'It's neat to be doing what I'm doing' says blind jazz singer who sounds like Sinatra

By **Matt Mulkeen**
Voices intern 2010 graduate, Wilson

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With the Reading Fair now under way, prepare for Rocco Fiorentino, a 13-year-old singing sensation from New Jersey, to take the stage tonight.

"I don't know much about the Reading area," Rocco said. "It's an exciting opportunity for me."

Rocco has overcome a lot to be in the position he's in now.

"Blindness has never stopped me from doing anything," said Rocco, who was born four months premature and lost his vision as an infant. "It's a part of me and nothing really happens because of it."

As an advocate for children with vision problems, Rocco has pushed hard for legislation in his home state of New Jersey that has helped the education of blind students. His awards, recognitions and accomplishments for his efforts are endless.

"There's no responsibility for me," said Rocco when asked what kind of responsibilities go with representing a group of people. "It's just a reward to be able to give back to other kids like me," he said. "I'd be doing it anyway."

Rocco is an advocate for blind children, but his music is his true passion.

Why is having Rocco perform in Reading a big deal? Well, he's already performed at Birdland, a famed jazz club in New York City, and the Bellagio in Las Vegas. His growing popularity has even resulted in some tabbing him as a future American Idol. He also just made his first movie appearance in "Standing Ovation," which had limited release in July.

"It's neat to be doing what I'm doing at such a young age," Rocco said. "Meeting people and going different places has been the highlight for me because you never know that life will bring you."

As his popularity grows, Rocco is still just a kid. He spends some of his free time playing the Wii, listening to his iPod and hanging out with friends. Most of the rest of his time is spent playing the piano, drums and saxophone so that he can keep his musical talents sharp.

"That's just me," he said. "It's my life, and I love it."

Some of Rocco's musical idols are Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett, and he often performs jazz tunes.

"I love hearing Rocco sing and play keyboard!" said Dave Souders, a director for the Agricultural and Horticultural Association of Berks County, which sponsors the Reading Fair.

The fair, which began Monday, will run through Saturday. Admission is \$10. Rocco's performance at the Reading Fair is 7 tonight.

In addition to Rocco's appearance, the fair will have tons to offer. The one-price daily admission includes access to all of the rides and attractions.

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Courtesy of Sharla Feldscher
Rocco Fiorentino sings tonight at the Reading Fair.

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Other performers will be the Sounds of the Street tonight; Steven Courtney on Wednesday; The British Invasion Tribute on Thursday; Bob Plunket on Friday; and the John King Dance Band on Saturday.

The fairgrounds is located off Route 183 North, at 1216 Hilltop Road, Bern Township. Festivities will run from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. today, Thursday and Friday; and from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Wednesday and Saturday.

The fair will conclude with a fireworks show sponsored by Redner's Warehouse Markets at 9 p.m. on Saturday.

For more information about the fair, including a schedule of attractions, go to www.readingfair.us.

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