

"A Little Bitty Thing with a Giant Voice": Edwardsville American Legion to Welcome Back "Voice" Finalist Ruby Leigh for NYE

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - When Wes Sterling saw 9-year-old Ruby Leigh perform at the American Legion Post #199 in 2016, he had no idea he was watching a future star of "The Voice."

Now 16 years old and a finalist in the reality singing competition, Leigh is returning to Post #199 to perform on New Year's Eve. Wes, the commander of Post #199, and his wife, Eva, are just as starstruck as they were then.

"My wife is a great big fan of Ruby's. We first met her when she was 9 when she came out here and played at the Bluegrass Festival," Wes remembered. "Ruby had been out here probably five or six times on different events and played for us."

A local promoter — and the Sterlings' friend — had seen Leigh's talent in her hometown of Foley, Missouri. He connected her to Post #199 in Edwardsville. The couple quickly became friends with Leigh's family, including her father, who Wes described as "a really, really nice guy."

As Leigh grew as a singer, the Sterlings cheered her on. They've been watching her every week on "The Voice" and were thrilled when she made it to the final five on Dec. 12, 2023.

"She has grown into her voice. She was a little bitty thing and had a giant voice, and the older she got, the better she was able to control it," Wes said. "She was about 11-ish or maybe 12, and she played out here and then came back the next year and she had learned how to play the guitar in the meantime. She's a prodigy."

This personal relationship made it all the more exciting when Leigh agreed to play at Post #199 for New Year's Eve. Wes and Eva can't wait to reconnect with an old friend, and the 250 people who have already bought tickets are eager to watch the up-and-coming country singer just an hour away from her hometown.

"This will probably be one of the last times we'll be able to afford to get her out here," Wes laughed.

The show will start at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2023, with the opening band No Rich Around with Melody LaBrott and Becca Harper. Leigh will play from 9 p.m. to midnight. Wes said they already have "cases of champagne," a catered menu and an almost sold-out venue. The Post also has a deal with Holiday Inn Express in Edwardsville, where they will send a shuttle to bring people back and forth to the hotel on Dec. 31.

Though there are only 250 tickets available in the hall, attendees can also watch from the bar. When Leigh found out, she immediately suggested that she could do a special song in the bar for those who couldn't fit in the hall.

That kindness is a key character trait for the singer, who has impressed audiences across the country with performances like “Country Roads, Take Me Home” by John Denver and “Mean (Taylor’s Version)” by Taylor Swift. Wes said there are people coming from as far away as Ohio, Tennessee and Florida to watch her New Year’s Eve performance at Post #199.

“She’s very, very nice, real well-mannered. She’s just always happy to talk to everybody,” Wes added. “We’re all looking forward to it.”

For more information about the American Legion Post #199 New Year’s Eve Party with Ruby Leigh, visit the [official Facebook event page](#) or call Post #199 at (618) 656-9774. Check out [Ruby Leigh’s website](#) or social media pages @RubyLeighOfficial to follow the singer as she competes on “The Voice” finale on Tuesday, Dec. 19, 2023.