

Myles Wins Contest Again

By [Scott Smith](#)

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Fifteen minutes after Kendreka Myles was handed the 22nd annual Channel 5 Youth Talent Contest Finals' first-place trophy Sunday in Fort Smith, she was still smiling from happiness and a touch of disbelief.

Myles, a 15-year-old sophomore at Northside High School who also won last year's competition, was among 20 regional acts who performed Sunday inside Harper Stadium as part of the 73rd annual Arkansas-Oklahoma State Fair. She sang Whitney Houston's "I Have Nothing," her voice mature and full for her age. Even the song's difficult key modulations couldn't prevent the daughter of Sheri and Kendrick Myles from claiming the contest's top prize.

"I feel very inspired that I was able to sing tonight," said Myles as her sparkling earrings shook and reflected the arena's bright lights. "It was inspiring to be able to take Whitney Houston's song and make it my own. Whitney Houston is an inspiration."

When the spotlight first found her onstage, Myles was more excited than nervous.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to perform for this," said Myles, who first sang in public at age 7 and is a member of First Missionary Baptist Church's choir in Fort Smith. "I wanted to show the audience how hard I've worked and practiced for this. I wanted to give them my best."

The Pendleton Sisters won second place, followed by Kendra Click for third place, Aspen Night for fourth place and Austyn Fulps for fifth place. Knight, a 13-year-old Van Buren resident, also won the event's Verna Pettway Encouragement Award, a new honor that recognizes the finals' youngest performer.

Entries ranged from singing country, pop and the Kris Kristofferson-Fred Foster staple, "Me and Bobby McGee," and instrumental showcases of acoustic guitar, fiddle and mandolin to stand-up comedy. The crowd of about 400 cheered for each act, while Channel 5 anchor Darren Bob served as emcee.

Backstage, each performer patiently awaited a turn on the arena's large stage. Some tuned their guitars; others kept their stomach butterflies away by visiting and wishing each other luck before their names were called.

Sunday's contestants included Anna Issac, Bekah Purifey, Wesley Mullen, Kendra and Kassadi Click, Boomer Lowrie, Chelsea Hampton, Holly Wrobel, Billie Jean Teehee, Courtney Christian, Justin Caleb Driggers, Sydney Davis, Katya Bullard, Jessica Tedford, Wes Fowler and Bre Ann Hollingshead.

The fair continues tonight with a 7:30 p.m. concert by Christian rock band Newsboys, followed Tuesday by an 8 p.m. show by country singer Gary Allan. BMX freestyle riders will entertain at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, the Elvis Extravaganza/Mr. Cabbagehead & The Screamin' Radishes concert starts at 6:30 p.m. Thursday and HardNox will sing rap and other styles at 8 p.m. Friday.

Saturday's headlining entertainment will be the Horns on Fire Freestyle Bullfighting show at 8 p.m.

For concert and ticket information, call 783-2393 or (800) 364-1080 or visit www.kayrodgerspark.com. Fair admission is \$6 for adults and \$3 for children.



Emma Jane Pendleton, left, and Marina Pendleton play the violins to “Cotton Patch Rag” on Sunday evening during their second-place performance at the Channel 5 Youth Talent Contest.