

# FAIR

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VID-19. Students, parents, teachers and more are finding solace in this song as they miss the experiences that come during the culmination of high school. Organic fan discovery led the song to chart on both Billboard and Mediabase with no major label support.

"I have several kids and parents that reach out every day saying this song has impacted them in a big way," says Baldrige. "Although I know times are tough right now, I am so happy that this song is connecting with people. It is a pretty special feeling."

"Senior Year" is the follow-up to "Before You" which Baldrige released earlier this year - co-written with LoCash members Preston Brust and Chris Lucas - as a tribute to his fiancé Katherine. Just before quarantine locked the country down, Bal-

dridge was lucky enough to squeeze in a trip to propose to his girlfriend of four years.

"Man, I was so lucky that we were able to get away," adds Baldrige. "I had been planning on doing this in Paris for so long. But due to Coronavirus, we had to change plans. Ultimately, we were able to make it to Aruba and the proposal was perfect."

Before breaking through with new music in 2020, Baldrige first debuted on the country music charts with his R&B-infused single "Dance With Ya" in 2016. But sophomore single "Middle of Nowhere Kids" was really the tune that led Baldrige back to his traditional roots. Written by Tony Lane, Randy Montana, and John Pierce, "Middle of Nowhere Kids" conjures up those images of growing up in Patoka, population 550.

And as he has done

for most of his career, Baldrige achieved radio success on his own terms - with extreme drive and belief in the message. As with "Senior Year," "Middle of Nowhere Kids" became a Top 50 song with no major label help. The connection between Baldrige and his passionate fanbase is true and authentic.

But getting to this new and more mature version of Drew Baldrige wasn't the work of a moment. It didn't come without a price, either. "I took six months off to write and recollect and clear out what I want to say," Baldrige says. "It was a really hard process, I'm not gonna lie. Half my band ended up quitting and moving on to other projects. Those guys were with me for six years. I couldn't blame 'em if they wanted to move on to different things. They were tired of waiting on me to figure out my life."

During the six months

that Baldrige took off to write and focus on the music, his grandfather passed away (less than two years after his grandmother passed away). This turned into a time of going back home and reengaging on the family farm and helping out with responsibilities left behind. Both grandparents had been formative influences on Baldrige, as a musician and also as a man. "My grandma was the one who took me to my piano lessons. She would always come over to the house and make sure I was playing while I was in kindergarten," recalls Baldrige. "She'd come up and sit at the piano next to me and say, 'Alright, show me what you've learned.'"

Baldrige's grandfather may not have been musical, but his lessons were no less important. "My grandpa couldn't sing a tune in a bucket. He probably never would've thought he'd have a grandson who'd play music. He

just taught me hard work from a young age," says Baldrige. "I think being in the music business right now, if I didn't have that background, there were several times I would've given up. My grandpa never complained about anything. He just worked hard."

That's why Baldrige sees no shame in saying that he's gotten this far through blood, sweat, and tears rather than coasting along on talent. "Knowing that you're not the most talented is a benefit. Never saying that you're the best always keeps you growing," he says. "I know I'm not the best singer, I know I'm not the best performer, I know I don't have the best songs. But I strive to do that every day and I'm not gonna stop until I hopefully one day get there."

The results are there to see in the tear-jerking pathos of "She's Somebody's Daughter," the slow-burning gospel of

"God's People," or the glory days reminiscence of "Senior Year." "A lot of the songs I wrote, like 'Senior Year,' that's 100 percent about my life. It's 100 percent about how I was walking the halls in that jersey, how we almost went state that year, how I can still see my hat being thrown up in the air," Baldrige says. "I want to create those images, create those stories that people can hear in their car and relate to 'em and take 'em back."

No matter what changes in Baldrige's life, with his band, or even in his music, one guiding principle will always be there. "When I listen to songs, I try to listen for simplicity. I don't want things to be too complicated," he says. "I like the simple life, I like simple things, so all these are very easy to listen to. I don't try to make it too difficult or overthink things."

## The Lake Land College alumna given ICCTA Pacesetter Award

The Lake Land College Board of Trustees awarded the 2021 ICCTA Pacesetter Award to alumna Megan McQueen at the March board of trustees meeting.

McQueen, Laker Nation Class of 2013, is a school counselor in the Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education at the Kansas Treatment and Learning Center. She said she was humbly appreciative of the award, and she now has it proudly displayed in her living room.

"I'm happy, and I'm grateful," McQueen said. "It makes me feel really good about myself to know I have made a difference. I don't do my job for glory, I do it because I know in my heart it's what I am meant to be doing. They say if you love your job you'll never have to work a day in your life, and that is very true for me."

Having now earned a master's degree in school counseling, McQueen said she began her college journey at Lake Land College

with no major in mind and no clear path to accomplishing her goals.

With hard work and determination as well as assistance from TRIO Student Support Services, McQueen worked her way through college, graduating with an associate degree in art and a 3.371 GPA.

As a nontraditional student, McQueen said her path was not always easy, but that attending Lake Land helped guide her toward her goals.

"Community college has so many options for people to explore," McQueen said. "The level of attention the instructors give to their students and the different ways the college helps people are unmatched. Now I always recommend community college first."

McQueen continued her education by earning a bachelor's degree in psychology as well as a master's degree in school counseling. She even completed an internship at

Lake Land College while working toward earning a master's degree. McQueen said it was during her time at Lake Land that she realized she wanted to pursue her dream of working with troubled children.

"I felt somewhat excluded as a kid," McQueen said. "I knew I wanted to help others and children in particular."

McQueen is now doing just that in her position at the Kansas Treatment and Learning Center. Often counseling children during difficult times, McQueen said she is glad she pursued her goal and is able to be in a position to help.

"I love my job," McQueen said. "Sometimes I get hugs from students I have struggled to connect with all year or get asked to eat lunch with students who had never spoken to me before. It is those moments that make me so happy I can make a difference doing what I love."



Submitted Photo

The Lake Land College Board of Trustees awarded the 2021 ICCTA Pacesetter Award to alumna Megan McQueen at the March board of trustees meeting. Pictured are Alumni Engagement & Special Events Coordinator Amanda Tucker, McQueen and Director of Dual Credit and Honors Experience Lisa Shumard-Shelton.

# IFB

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meal. Historically the high protein meal was in demand for animal feed and the oil was sort of a byproduct. That has been turned around right now. Shortages of other oil-producing crops like canola or palm nuts have made soybean oil more important. Soybean oil has many industrial and food uses.

Cooking oil and salad dressing are major soy oil uses in this country.

Illinois has several bean crushing plants and a good market for our soybeans. Decatur, Taylorville, and Gibson City in this area have soybean processing plants. The first plant in the United States built exclusively to crush soybeans was built in Decatur. The exact date seems to be uncertain, but it was in operation by 1922. Soy-

beans were grown in China for centuries, but they have been grown here only since the early 1900s.

North and South Dakota are now growing so many beans that one of the major soybean crushers is putting a plant in that area. That region was always a large producer of spring wheat. Wheat is grown around the world and in good supply right now. There have been early soybean varieties developed

for the upper Midwest and production is increasing in an area that formerly grew very few.

The last of the soybean herbicide is being sprayed and roadsides are being mowed. We just now got our first cutting of hay baled up. I know of hay fields that have been mowed for the second time. The recommendation is to mow alfalfa every four weeks for the best quality hay. The weather

has a say in that scheduling. Three to four rain-free days are needed to cure the hay enough to bale it. We have probably lost a cutting of hay by being so late with the first one.

Last year the Illinois Farm Bureau held virtual Nutrient Stewardship Days around the state. This year there will be 12 live events to demonstrate various techniques that can be used to reduce nutrient loss from farm fields. The

Farm Bureau has committed to good stewardship of our soils, water, and air. These seminars are part of that commitment. If you are interested in attending one of these, the schedule can be found at [www.ilfb.org/FieldDays](http://www.ilfb.org/FieldDays). The field day in Coles County on July 15 is the nearest site for us.

Thank you for reading about Douglas County agriculture this month.

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## The Lake Land College nursing department granted continuing accreditation for fall 2021

The Lake Land College nursing department received continuing accreditation for both the associate degree and practical nursing programs with the next scheduled evaluation visit taking place in Fall 2028.

"Maintaining continued accreditation is an outstanding achievement," Nursing Instructor/Director of Nursing Programs Cheryl Beam said. "It demonstrates a commitment to quality nursing education."

Lake Land College received formal notification in April 2021 of this action taken by the Board

of Commissioners for the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) at its March 2021 meeting.

ACEN Board members evaluated materials from the accreditation review process and the recommendation for accreditation proposed by the peer evaluators on the site visit team and the Evaluation Review Panel.

Providing specialized accreditation for programs of nursing education, the ACEN supports the interests of nursing education, nursing practice and the public.

The ACEN commend-

ed the flexibility, courage and resiliency demonstrated by the college's nursing program faculty and leaders as well as their institutional colleagues during the global pandemic.

"We are very proud to have earned this continuing accreditation for our nursing programs," Division Chair of Allied Health/Nursing Instructor Erin Swingler said. "Everyone involved in these programs demonstrates a commitment to excellence and to the values of the college. Our Lake Land College nursing programs have a strong tradition of preparing knowledgeable

and skilled nurses to meet the needs of employers and to provide caring, quality healthcare to patients."

Accreditation is a voluntary, peer-review, self-regulatory process by which non-governmental associations recognize educational institutions or programs that meet or exceed standards and criteria for educational quality.

To learn more about the nursing programs at Lake Land College, visit [lakelandcollege.edu/guided-pathways](http://lakelandcollege.edu/guided-pathways) or contact Beam at 217-234-5452 or [cbeam@lakelandcollege.edu](mailto:cbeam@lakelandcollege.edu).