

# Midcounty Extra

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## A step toward Nashville

Patrons of Lana Kress' karaoke business encouraged the singer to pursue her dream

By **KRISTINE THOMAS**  
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

FAIRVIEW —

Lana Kress never forgot the words her aunt spoke to her.

Those words told her where she belonged, who she was and predicted her future.

"When I was in the seventh grade I sang at my Aunt Pat's wedding and afterwards my Aunt Jeanette told me that I should really do something with my voice," Kress, said.

It took Kress many years before she followed her aunt's advice. She thought her life's path led elsewhere.

"Looking back, I realize everything I've been through has been for a reason," she said. "Everything I've done has helped me to get to where I am today."

Kress said she is standing "two steps away" from her dream of being a top country-western singer.

Kress will compete Saturday in the Country Showdown Northwest Regional Finals at Kelly's Grand Old Opry in Post Falls, Idaho. The event's winner will attend the national finals of the True Value Country Showdown in Nashville, Tenn. The national winner receives \$50,000 and the title, "Best New Act in Country Music."

An accountant with her own consulting firm, Kress won the KWJJ Country Showdown at the Bones 'n Brew Festival at Portland's Waterfront Park on Sept. 9. For the second year in a row, she won the Washington State Country Showdown, which earned her a trip to the Northwest Regional Finals.

"I had to compete in Washington to win the state title because KWJJ's contest was too late to enter the Oregon contest," she explained.

Kress has always loved to sing but never imagined pursuing a singing career until eight years ago.

A graduate of Centennial High School, Kress was active in student government, athletics and Future Business Leaders of America. There was no time in her schedule for choir in either high school or college.

"When I was in high school, I



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attended a conference where I saw a presentation on accounting and I knew then and there that I wanted to be a certified public accountant for a Big Six accounting firm," Kress said.

She was on her way to achieve her goal until she hit a roadblock — she found auditing boring. About 10 years ago she was work-

ing as a flight attendant in Japan when she went to a karaoke bar with friends.

"I loved getting up and singing. It was a blast," she said. "When I quit working as a flight attendant, I decided to start my own mobile karaoke business."

Lugging her equipment to res-

### ON THE NET

To learn more about Lana Kress, go to her Web site at [www.lanakress.com](http://www.lanakress.com)

taurants and bars, Kress found she had to sing a few songs before others would gather the courage to do so. The customers complimented her on her voice and encouraged her to sing for them.

For several years, Kress tried balancing her karaoke and consulting businesses along with her personal life. But it wasn't until recent personal changes that she decided to focus all her energy on music.

"I am recently divorced and that caused me to do a lot of thinking about my life and what really makes me happy," she said. "I love to sing. It's so much fun and it means so much to me to sing for others."

To truly sing country music, Kress said, takes a personal understanding of the lyrics' meaning.

"I couldn't have sung these words with the feeling I do now when I was younger," Kress said.

In 1999, on her own, she released her first compact disc, "Be Careful What You Wish For."

"If everything goes how I wish for it to go, I could leave the competition as the winner

" she said. "I've been working hard for this dream and it would be great for it to come true."

Her father, Dan Obrist, gets shivers down his spine when he hears Lana sing. He's always been proud of her achievements but seeing her sing amazes him.

"She has an unbelievable talent," Obrist said. "I don't know how she can get up there and sing like she does. She impresses the heck out of me."

No matter what happens Saturday, Kress said she will feel like a "success."

"I will only see myself as a failure if I give up on my dream," she said.