

Janie Grand was captivated by a gaze

News

Posted By **MARYANNE FIRTH , TRIBUNE STAFF**

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It was 2 a.m. and the words just came flowing out of Janie Grand.

The Welland native was watching a video of children in Afghanistan, and she became captivated by a young girl's gaze.

It was a look of curiosity, and of suspicion.

And it was from that look that Grand was inspired to put a pen to paper.

Now living in London, Ont., the Welland native has become part of a national campaign to help raise awareness around the life and culture of those living in Afghanistan.

The campaign is part of the Canadian Rotarian Centennial Afghanistan School Challenge, which has Rotary clubs and the Canadian government partnering to build a school in the overseas country.

The awareness campaign, to be launched Aug. 20, will feature Grand's original song, More I Want to Know, produced by acclaimed musician and producer Mark Lalama.

Lalama -- who has worked with artists such as Amy Sky and Olivia Newton-John -- has been making time to create songs for a good cause since his first studio experience at 17, when he wrote a song for United Way in Welland.

This time around, he was producing Grand's solo project at his Pelham studio when the opportunity to get involved with the Afghanistan School Challenge came along.

Lalama had previously produced another campaign song with Grand for grassroots charity Heart to Heart Africa.

"Music is a universal language," he said, which can convey a message to people around the world, regardless of whether or not they understand the lyrics.

"Music can strike a chord with anyone ... You don't have to understand the language to understand the intent of the vocalist."

Grand hoped the song would inspire local youths to look past the conflict that is occurring in Afghanistan, and to see the lives that carry on despite the ongoing war.

"It's all about the message," she said, adding she took her emotions from the video and applied them to the song.

More I Want to Know will be available for download at www.afghanistanschool.ca after the campaign is launched on Aug. 20.

mfirth@wellandtribune.ca

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