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Introducing ... SteveSongs: Children's musician with new PBS show comes to Seattle to entertain and raise money for Children's Hospital

By: Abbey McGee , Journal Newspapers

Every parent is on a quest to find children's music that is entertaining, educational and still enjoyable after listening to it over and over again. SteveSongs is that kind of music. The kids love him and their parents may find themselves listening to his music when they are driving the car - without the kids.

Connecticut-based Steve Roslonek, creator of SteveSongs, will make his Seattle debut performing an acoustic concert to benefit uncompensated care at Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center on Saturday, May 17 at 11 a.m. at the University of Washington's Kane Hall. He will also perform a private concert for hospital patients.

Seattle mom Christine Leahy has wanted to bring SteveSongs to Seattle ever since her family was introduced to his music four years ago. "My family fell in love with SteveSongs after a babysitter gave my girls one of his CDs," said Leahy. "After finding out last October that he was going to come to the West Coast this May, I knew I had to figure out how to make it work," said Leahy.

Leahy formed the Blue Sky Guild, a member of the Children's Hospital Guild Association, and booked the SteveSongs benefit concert. Leahy has always been interested in the Guild Association, an organization that supports individuals and groups that have an idea and want to make an impact to support the hospital. "Last fall, everything started to take shape," said Leahy. "I recruited friends of mine to join and in December, we were officially recognized as the Blue Sky Guild," said Leahy. The 14-member guild wanted to share SteveSongs with Seattle while raising much-needed funds for a great cause.

Roslonek has found much success over the past eight years, recording five CDs, and earning numerous awards, but his music career had an unconventional beginning.

Throughout college, Roslonek enjoyed music as a hobby, but with an economics degree, opted



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for a corporate job. Just for fun, he wrote a children's song that his younger brother heard - and liked. "He asked me to write some specific songs for his first-grade classroom about the seasons and the days of the week," said Roslonek. "I gave it a try and had a great time. It felt natural from the start, I just wasn't sure if I could do that for a living."

After writing several kid-focused songs, Roslonek recorded his first album. He got a great response and pursued a full-time music career. "I played a couple of shows and really enjoyed it," recalled Roslonek. "I knew that I could always go back to the business world."

Roslonek enjoys writing and performing children's music because of the creative freedom it gives him. "No one asks, 'What's his sound?' and critiques me for my musical choices," continued Roslonek. "I can play rock, blues or jazz and push the envelope."

A gifted writer, Roslonek creates most of his songs by himself or with producer, Anand Nayak. Roslonek has also included children in the writing process, composing some songs in classrooms around the country.

Roslonek finds his inspiration all around him. "I'm always in writing mode," he explained. "I look at the world like a kid does, in absolute wonder at how things work." Most of his songs focus on an educational theme, like gravity, or on a lesson about how to treat others. "With every song, I try to add some kind of value to a child's life."

SteveSongs is grown-up music with kid content. "We try and make the arrangements enjoyable for adults," he said. "If you craft a song and arrange it for an adult ear and the kids listen to it and like it too, you've created a winning piece."

Roslonek often performs with a band, but he'll be playing solo in Seattle. "I enjoy the versatility of performing acoustically," he said. "I can stop when I want to and the performance becomes more of a conversation between me and the audience. It's much more interactive."

The response he gets from his audience is the best part of his job. "A child's response is so genuine and uninhibited. They don't think twice about singing along or standing up and clapping," said Roslonek. "I love the energy, honesty and excitement of a family audience."

Starting on May 19th, Roslonek will also appear daily on national TV as Mr. Steve, the new co-host of the PBS Kids preschool morning block. He'll be singing original songs in between shows and introducing musical elements. "It's fun playing in front of a camera and knowing that I'm connecting with millions of kids," said Roslonek. He will be singing some of his new songs at the Seattle concert.

"We feel like we're riding the crest of the wave with Steve. He's been out there for several years and is really coming into his own and finding great success," noted Leahy. "We're thrilled to bring him to the area and raise money for Children's Hospital."

To purchase tickets, visit www.stevesongs.com/shows.html or call (800) 838-3006. Advance tickets are \$10 for children ages 2 and over (\$12 at the door) and \$12 for adults (\$15 at the door).