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Kenny Woods, Berkeley Heights Teacher, Shows Singing Talent in Recent Show

Atmosphere of all-ages performance is singer-songwriter's trademark.

By [Gerard Longo \(/users/gerard-longo/\)](/users/gerard-longo/) | [Email the author \(#\)](#) | March 26, 2011

Summit-based singer-songwriter Kenny Woods loves to perform, and recently, he took the stage for a free acoustic concert at the Patricia M. Kuran Cultural Arts Center in Fanwood to the delight of the crowd.

Woods, who is a music teacher by the name “Mr. Sack” at Berkeley Heights Early Childhood Education Center, was happy to bring a free, all-ages show to Fanwood and the surrounding community.

“What’s wonderful about teaching is you have to be very spontaneous in order to be a successful teacher, so that has really influenced my live playing and my songwriting,” said Woods. “I write kids’ music too, so I perform as Mr. Sack. That’s all fun kids’ songs, but it’s still family-friendly no matter what (style I’m playing).”

Woods, whose song “Thankful For You” has reached over 360,000 hits on YouTube and has been heard as a wedding song around the world, plays guitar and piano with a diverse range of influences. The end product is something that plays tribute to those influences, all while having an individual stamp on it that Woods can call his own.

“I recorded some of my songs with Jackson Brown’s guitar player in California, so there’s definitely that influence,” said Woods. “Elton John on piano is a big influence, but I’m basically just trying to be me.”

Woods performed on both instruments at the Kuran Cultural Arts Center on Sunday, drawing from audience participation and an energetic demeanor to make his performance complete.

“I do so much with adult music, kids music, different instruments, so really I like to mix it up a lot and try different things out, take risks onstage—measured risks,” said Woods. “I like to have a lot of fun when I do shows with the kids.”

While the subject matter is, on the whole, family-friendly, Woods touches on some real-life, hot button topics that are sure to hit home for some listeners. One example is his song “Fly Forever in My Heart” -- which features lyrics in both English and Spanish and was written in dedication to the wildlife affected by the BP Gulf Coast oil spill in 2010.

“I like to have some songs that are not just about me in my emotional life; I like to connect with what’s going on in the world,” said Woods. “Even when the songs are just about emotions, you can kind of connect with people who are going through the same things.”