

Her song rocks

Nurse's melody about aging well grabs top prize

By GERRY WEISS
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Before they ever popped in Priscilla White's video, there was the judges' surprise at having received it in the first place.

A contest committee set up at Mather LifeWays, a Chicago-based company that specializes in senior living, gathered in a conference room earlier this winter to go over the 56-year-old Erie nurse's submission to their "Aging Well Rocks!" song contest.



Real people

Dozens of entries, some from as far away as Ireland and England, filled the room with neat stacks of compact discs and liner-note sheets.

But White was the only entrant to send along a performance video.

"It went a long way toward impressing the judges," says Stuart Greenblatt of Mather LifeWays, adding that a performance video was not a requirement of the contest. "That made Priscilla really stand out, really come alive. She had great energy and struck the tone we were looking for."

White's "Aging Well" captured the competition's quest of finding an original song, written by someone 55 or older, that conveys the joys of aging.

A registered nurse at the Pennsylvania Soldiers' &



GREG WOHLFORD/Erie Times-News

Priscilla White, of Erie, writes about the joys of aging in her prize-winning song, "Aging Well." She composed her song for Mather LifeWays, a Chicago company that specializes in senior living. The competition drew songs nationwide and some from as far away as Ireland and England.

Sailors' Home, White wrote the song in only three days, humming the melody as she walked the grounds of the facility during morning and afternoon breaks.

Then she went MTV.

"My son's friend wants to make movies, so we asked him

to shoot of a video of us," White says. "It all came together pretty quickly."

She recorded the winning entry in summer on a beach at Presque Isle State Park, with her husband, Rex,



WATCH IT

See video of White performing her song.

GoErie.com/video/agingwell

► Please see **SONG, 2B**



GREG WOHLFORD/Erie Times-News

Priscilla White and her husband, Rex, enjoy performing together at their east Erie home. Priscilla White recently won a songwriting contest for her song "Aging Well."

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harmonizing and playing guitar in the background.

"I was thrilled to hear that I won," says White, an amateur songwriter for the past 30 years who's been influenced by James Taylor, Pete Seeger and other folk artists. "I couldn't believe it. When I hadn't heard back for a few months, I just sort of gave up. Then I got the call."

Nancy Stevenson, commandant at the Soldiers' & Sailors' Home, says White's experience working with the aging, as well as her own "personal tenderness," shines through in the song and the video performance.

"We are so proud of Priscilla. This is a great honor," Stevenson said. "She's an outstanding nurse, and we're very fortunate to have her here."

As winner of the competition, White has her video of "Aging Well" playing on Mather Life-Ways' Web site, www.matherlifeways.com.

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There is no money prize, but that doesn't bother her.

"Having worked with the aging since the early 1990s, I wanted to write a song showing that getting older is not synonymous with giving up on your dreams," White says. "People don't have to give up living as soon as they hit their older years. They can develop passions and interests every day of their lives."

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SHE WRITES THE SONG

The following are the lyrics to Priscilla White's "Aging Well":

When you wake up in the morning and you're glad to be alive,
When you start the day with a smile on your face.
And even though you may have all those aches and pains,
You're just glad you can get up and take your place.
Be thankful for your blessings, life's too short to be depressed
How much time we have is impossible to tell,
Make the most of every moment and enjoy your friends and family.
That's the way you can be sure you're aging well.

(Chorus)

Aging well, take a walk and breathe the air.
Aging well, don't just sit in your rocking chair.
Aging well, there's still a big wide world out there
And you'll enjoy it to the fullest aging well.

Visit someone who is lonely, send a letter to an old friend, or just call
and tell a loved one that you care.
Sing a song, it doesn't matter if you go off key, because singing's
something everyone can share.
Take a trip someplace far away or just to your back yard
And when you see some roses take a smell.
We only have one life to live, it's not a dress rehearsal, and we'll live it
right when we are aging well.

(Repeat chorus)