She became a celebrity after moving from Mount Airy, but Donna Fargo can still find her way around town. The Grammy-winning country music artist, who was born Yvonne Vaughn in Mount Airy, made multiple appearances in the Granite City after carrying out her duties as grand marshal in Saturday's Christmas Parade. Following the parade in the morning, Fargo stopped by the Earle Theatre where she spoke with WPAQ's Kelly Epperson. After that she headed to the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, where a Hometown Hero exhibit tells Fargo's story. She held a meet-and-greet and autograph signing there before moving further down Main Street for an appearance at Pages Bookstore.

At the museum Fargo met up with her old friend Pete Ballard (an artist and costume designer from West Virginia who has local ties) prior to meeting with fans, who assembled in a long line on the second floor of the museum to await their turn to meet Fargo. She was also interviewed by two students. Fifth-grader Savannah Allen interviewed Fargo for her project with the Jesse Franklin Pioneers Club of the Tar Heel Junior Historians; and 19-year-0ld UNC Chapel Hill journalism student Sara Pequeno interviewed Fargo for a final paper in one of her classes. In answering one of Savannah's questions, Fargo called singing "my little secret wish," noting it was a dream she had always hoped to attain. The star sang at Slate Mountain Baptist Church as a child and in college for sorority events. Fargo said singing in front of large crowds didn't come easy, however, as she was a little nervous. She even fainted once when her brother set her up to sing without her knowledge of the plans. She noted she draws inspiration for her songs from her childhood here and from her fans.

"My life in Mount Airy influenced me greatly," said Fargo, noting she attended school in Flat Rock and at Mount Airy High. "The people of Mount Airy are wonderful people. They encourage you just because they love you." Fargo, who now lives in Tennessee, said she doesn't regularly travel back home to Mount Airy. Instead, she makes occasional appearances for book signings, parades and other events. She has an affectionate place in her heart for her old hometown. "Visiting is a great opportunity to meet people who are new to Mount Airy, and I also get to see people I grew up with," said Fargo. "It feels good to be home." She said the life experiences she gained in Mount Airy helped in her music career, and she was inspired to become a teacher by her own teachers in Mount Airy. "It's important we never lose sight of where we came from," explained Fargo. "I'm a better songwriter and writer because I grew up here."

According to many in town, Fargo breaks the mold when it comes to celebrities. She never forgot the town from which she came and adores her fans as much as they love her. After graduating from then-High Point College in the 1960s, Fargo headed west to California, where she began teaching, according to a Fargo biography. However, she saw her career in singing and writing take off when Dot Records picked up what would become her hit single, The

Happiest Girl in the Whole USA, in 1972. That debut song hit number one in country music and also broke into the Billboard Hot 100 pop chart in the same year. Taylor Swift would be the next artist to accomplish that feat more than 30 years after Fargo did it. Fargo has done much since her breakthrough, including recording multiple albums and writing many songs. She also began work on her autobiography in 1992 and has a line of greeting cards. In 2010, she released her fourth book, *I Thanked God for You Today.* Prior to that, she had released three poetry books. On Saturday she noted she has written seven total books.