



## CMA Fest portrait: Thomas Rhett makes dream come true for grieving 16-year-old

Jun 9, 2016, 2:49pm CDT

Link: <http://www.bizjournals.com/nashville/news/2016/06/09/cma-fest-portrait-thomas-rhett-makes-dream-come.html>

Madison Burchell was crying as she buried her head into Thomas Rhett's chest for a hug at the CMA Music Festival Thursday. Joy, grief and remembrance filled her head and overwhelmed her body. This was the moment she was here for, to tell Rhett her story.

Burchell, 16, is just one of nearly 85,000 people visiting Nashville this weekend for the city's largest tourist attraction. But Burchell had a larger purpose in mind than attending country music shows. She wanted Rhett to know about her boyfriend, 18-year-old Hagan Newland, who died in April.

Thomas Rhett's "Die a Happy Man" was the couple's song — Newland would sing it to Burchell regularly.

Burchell, who lives in Ashland City, got her chance to meet Rhett as part of a sponsored meet-and-greet at Music City Center. She was overwhelmingly grateful.

"It was just amazing to be able to tell him (Rhett) what happened and for him to be comforting. It meant a lot to me," she said.

Rhett told Burchell that he and his family would be praying for her and thanked her for telling him the story. Then Burchell, tears streaming, ducked under a rope to get out of the crowd. On the other side of the rope, her mother, Susie West, held her in a long embrace.

"I don't know how we'll top that with anything else," West said.