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humor in the things that happen to her. "I had three car accidents in three months in 2003," she says. "The third time I was hit, I was laughing as my car was spinning through the intersection because I was thinking, 'I just got my car fixed!'"

Overall, Hand says her experiences—both positive and negative—have helped her grow as a humorist. "I have learned to speak from my heart more than just my gut," she says. "I am changing from a crass, relationships-suck humor to a how-can-we-make-our-lives-more-fun approach."

Hand plans to continue speaking, performing standup and leading laughter clubs, but she is also looking for new challenges. "I want to

do more traveling both personally and professionally, I am thinking of doing another one-woman show, and I might want to get into broadcasting at some point," she says. "I am just really open to new opportunities."

Hand is also open to a new relationship—as long as her next partner can make her laugh. "I think it is really important to find someone who shares your sense of humor," she says. "Laughter is really important to me. It has been a big gift in my life." **J**

GAIL HAND will host a benefit production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* featuring *Darcelle XV* at 7 p.m. Feb. 13 and 14 at Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave. Tickets are \$12-\$15 from 503-823-4322. For more information about

You Must Be Kidding

No, really, laughter CAN cure what ails you!

Just as depression has been shown to weaken the immune system, laughter can increase relaxation, which is a major antidote to stress, a known danger to your health (and that's no laughing matter).

According to BestHealth.com, researchers believe a good belly laugh can also improve breathing, help digestion, increase oxygen in the blood and cause chemical changes in the brain that boost the body's resistance to illness.

So, to cure what ails you, turn to Page 22 for a guide to some queer-friendly comedy recommendations.

—Jim Radosta

upcoming performances and laughter workshops, call 503-284-2342 or visit www.gailhand.com.

JODI HELMER is a Portland free-lance writer. Visit her online at www.jodihelmer.com.



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