

KEIZER LIFE



Laughing together again

Stand-ups deliver doses of the best medicine at cultural center

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

As a stand-up comedian, Jared Richard dreads some of the venues he's had to perform in.

"There's never any parking. All the venues seem to be right off a busy street and it's always super inconvenient for the performers and the audience to find a place to put their cars," Richard said.

When he and friend Andrew Brunello were looking for a new stand-up comedy venue, the parking around the Keizer Cultural Center was one major enticement.

The duo is producing regular comedy shows in the Keizer Homegrown Theatre space at the cultural center and the enthusiasm for the shows as pandemic restrictions were lifted has been palpable.

When the pandemic forced everyone to live vicariously through their computer and phone screens, there were some aspects of life that simply didn't translate well. For Richard and Brunello, stand-up comedy was one of them.

"We both saw a lot of comedians out there trying different things, but none of it seemed to work, and it definitely didn't have the same feel as a live show," said Richard, president of the Salem Theatre Network. "My favorite thing in the world is people laughing together and we can agree to laugh at something together - a joke that is undeniable - it feels like maybe not all is lost."

Brunello is the booker for PNW Comedy, which is an organization hosting stand-up shows throughout the mid-valley and at the Keizer Cultural Center, 980 Chemawa Road N.E. There is a new stand-up event slated almost every week. The talent ranges from locals taking advantage of an open mic to touring pros.

The next Keizer show, on July 22,

will feature touring comics Amy Miller and Johnny Pemberton. Miller was a semi-finalist on *Last Comic Standing*

He said the building felt like a place for a library or museum. Then I told him it had both of those too.

— ANDREW BRUNELLO
Booker, PNW COMEDY

and Pemberton currently plays Bo in the sit-com *Superstore*. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are available at pnwcomedy.com. Those who want to sign up for a few

minutes on an open mic night can also do so at the site. On July 23, traveling comics Cheri Hardman, from Washington, and Ken Hamlett, from Illinois, are taking the stage. On July 24, Andrew Sleighter, who made his big debut on Conan, will stop by Keizer.

The first show Brunello booked in Keizer sold out all 30 tickets, which was the limit under COVID-19 restrictions.

"When I first visited the [Keizer Homegrown Theatre Space], I think I fell in love with it. And having the show sell out was an indication that people were ready for stand-up again. It was validation that there was still a space for stand-up," Brunello said.

Given the tribulations of the past 16 months, Brunello and Richard worried that the space for jokes and laughter had dried up. But audiences and performers have enjoyed the show and the atmosphere Keizer Homegrown Theatre created within the cultural center.

Another stand-up performer who visited the theatre for the first time was surprised to find the space so enticing and said as much to Brunello.

"He said the building felt like a place for a library or museum. Then I told him it had both of those too," Brunello said.

Most of the shows are meant for a crowd that is 18 or older, but Brunello is hoping to book all-ages shows in the future.

"One of the things people typically associate with stand-up is drinking, but we don't have that at the cultural center. I think it opens up to experimenting with the types of shows we can have," Brunello said.

As one of the guiding hands for the local live theatre scene, Richard wants the Keizer shows to have a heavy element of audience participation.

"We want to build a community. We want to know what type of comedy the audience wants. If they are interested in skit or improv in addition to stand-up, we might be able to find a space for it," Richard said.

Those with ideas, insights or suggestions are welcome to engage with Brunello and Richard at info@pnwcomedy.com.

"We want this to be a space where all types of comedy are included," Brunello added. "If we get that kind of buy-in it will feel way more like a community."

While parking and the theatre itself were major draws in bringing comedy to Keizer, but Richard said there was one other benefit to hosting the shows in Keizer.

"It's right next to the municipal court so the comedians have to behave themselves, which is really nice," he said.

One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel
Introducing the INOGEN ONE - It's oxygen therapy on your terms

No more tanks to refill. No more deliveries. No more hassles with travel. The INOGEN ONE portable oxygen concentrator is designed to provide unparalleled freedom for oxygen therapy users. It's small, lightweight, clinically proven for stationary and portable use, during the day and at night, and can go virtually anywhere — even on most airlines. Inogen accepts Medicare and many private insurances!

Reclaim Your Freedom And Independence NOW!

Call Inogen Today To Request Your FREE Info Kit
1-855-839-0752

inogen
© 2020 Inogen, Inc. All rights reserved. MKT-P0108

A Smarter Way to Power Your Home.

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!

ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A \$300 SPECIAL OFFER!*
1 (844) 989-2328

*Offer value when purchased at retail. Solar panels sold separately.

GENERAC PWRCELL SOLAR + BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEM