

GO! talent



CO CAREs

The Bulletin and Scalehouse, a collaborative for the arts, have joined to raise donations to help Central Oregon's creative artists — musicians, visual artists, performers and creative workers — by offering grants and a platform to bring attention to local amazing talent. This is a crowdfunding effort with a first-round fundraising goal of \$40,000. To make a tax-deductible donation or apply for a grant, go to bendbulletin.com/talent.

Kaupp misses the audiences

BY DAVID JASPER

The Bulletin

When the pandemic abruptly halted the risqué business of Bend Burlesque, Mehama Kaupp and other members of the Central Oregon dance troupe struggled to keep creatively active. Kaupp is this week's featured artist in the Central Oregon Creative Artists Relief Effort, or CO CAREs, a grant program aiming to offset financial setbacks of area performers and artists.

"We were all kind of unmotivated, due to quarantine depression, I think," Kaupp said. "I have Darling Divine running the Patreon (a membership app that allows patrons can directly support artists), but nobody was really — we couldn't get together, we couldn't meet up. It was just kind of, like, complete shutdown."

In the early days of COVID-19, Kaupp, a nurse by profession, was an early innovator. She created a video performance series, the Shelter in Place Showcase, a COVID-safe creative outlet in which dancers, comedians and other entertainers were filmed performing on porches and backyards for home viewing.

"We were trying to do whatever we could and try and stay motivated for a few months," she said.

But something felt like it was missing: an audience.

"I feel like live entertainment needs

an audience, like a live audience, when you're doing stuff that felt really crowd-interactive," she said. "We like to involve the audience and talk to the audience and have people come up on stage, so it just kind of put the kibosh on that."

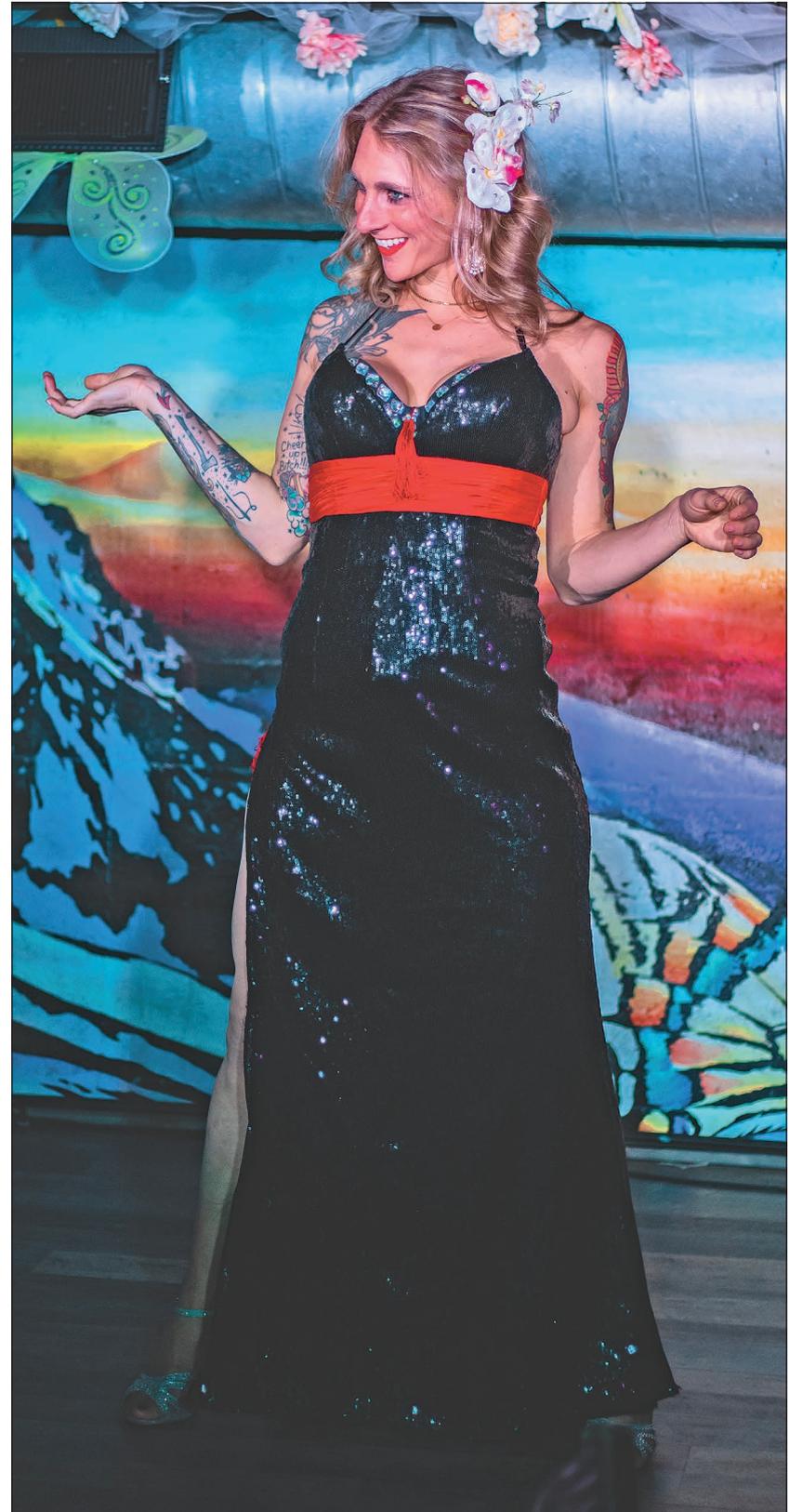
While Bend Burlesque Co. is a small operation, Kaupp said it took a financial hit during the pandemic. The company had to move out of the office space it had only recently moved into and could no longer afford a practice space.

"The business doesn't make tons of money anyway," she said. "It's a small business. We do shows once or twice a month, so it's not like we were raking in cash before, but it just took the hugest hit. We just have nothing to fall back on. It just became (me) supporting the business on my own, which is not what I want to do. That's not the goal of running a small business, to stress out constantly financially."

On April 2 and 3, Bend Burlesque Co. was able to return to the stage, putting on a springtime-flavored show "Birds, Bees, and Bare Knees" for small audiences at The Capitol, located in downtown Bend.

"We have to follow the strict guidelines there, which we're happy to do," Kaupp said. "Everyone just wants to perform. . . . Performing for 40 people, it takes a little longer to warm everybody up, but it's way more intimate, way more worth it. It was fun."

■ David Jasper: 541-383-0349, djasper@bendbulletin.com



David Helton/Submitted photo

Mehama Kaupp entertains the audience in one of Bend Burlesque Co.'s "Birds, Bees, and Bare Knees" shows April 2 and 3 at The Capitol in downtown Bend.