

Healthy attitudes, healthy living:

Hillary Saffran deals heavy doses of laughter, for your health

BY JACOB MANN
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PALMER — Hillary Saffran, the Mat-Su Valley's one and only, multi-faceted entertainer shared her talents just for the health of it. The comedian, author, singer/songwriter, actor, and ventriloquist entertained, educated and interacted with a jovial crowd during her "Recycle Your Stress into Humor and Healthy Living" event at the Valley Community Recycling Solutions (VCRS) on April 25, 2018.

"It's true! Laughter really is the best medicine," Saffran said.

Saffran fired up all of her cylinders and led a multi-faceted workshop with live ukulele music, improvisational and laughter exercises, and informative riffs to reduce stress. Like a pinball machine, her brain lit up and bounced around inside the VCRS presentation room. She talked about her experiences and she would make riff after riff—almost like Jonathan Winters or Robin Williams. Saffran has acclimated to the Valley life after immigrating from New York a while back.

"I think that's where stress was invented," she pursed.

She disclaimed that she is not a medical professional then dove into her four major components to reduce stress with the power of humor and a good laugh. Laughter can potentially add years to your life she noted.

"I realize that not everything is funny but you can turn it around. You can lighten it up," Saffran said.

The four components to reducing stress, outlined in Saffran's workshop:

1.) How to turn stressful comments and hurtful situations into humor: Saffran shared how to turn stressful and hurtful situations into humor, "it's all material!" She used her life experience with some comedy writing techniques from her book, "Boomer Haiku and More Random Silliness."



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2.) Making your own healthy stress busters: Saffran listed a handful of stress reducing tricks and encouraged the crowd to make their own. She used examples from her other book, "Laughing in the Rain, Self-Care for the Storms of Life."

3.) Laughter as a therapeutic tool: Saffran showed the audience several laughter exercises, including "Laughter Yoga," when she lived in Colorado, Saffran was trained as a certified laughter leader through the "World Laughter Tour" founded by psychologist Steve Wilson.

"This systematic, therapeutic

and credible method is now used by hundreds of professional organizations and health-care communities. Among them include nurses, psychologists, counselors, activity therapists, health educators, marriage and family therapists, social workers, and volunteers. The roots of these methods can be traced to ancient practices, biblical prescriptions, and modern science. Laughter therapy reflects Steve Wilson's 45+ year career in psychology and a philosophy of happiness through living with a positive sense of urgency, summed up as; "Don't Postpone Joy" Saffran said.

4.) Improvisation exercises as a therapeutic tool to relieve stress as well as a tool for ice breakers and connection: Saffran spent seven years in the improvisational theater group Denver Theater Sports, and she's also presented those exercises in team building activities for social workers.

She said that while she hasn't abused drugs or alcohol, she's been to a few Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings and picked up some positive life skills and

attitudes based on their 12 Step Program.

"What people learn in treatment is really healthy living," Saffran said.

Essentially, it's all about one's attitude, their perception and reaction to life's events. As they say in AA, "... accept the things you cannot change and change the things you can..."

"What happened to you is a circumstance. It doesn't define you," Saffran said.

People's minds have a tendency to perseverate or "loop," according to Saffran. Negative thoughts can run rampant, like a Vine video, playing over and over, consuming on both a conscious and subconscious level.

She led a breathing exercise. Everyone took deep breaths. This is one of the most common stress busters across the board.

"You can re-frame things," Saffran said.

She warned the crowd with age-old advice, "hatred, bitterness, anger, jealousy, greed, resentment— it's a 'poison you take to make someone else sick.' Most of the audience nodded in agreement.

"If you wish a person bad, you can feel it," Saffran said, groaning and holding her gut with animation. Everything is an outlook. You don't realize how powerful your thoughts are, Saffran said.

One of Saffran's last exercises with the group were a few rounds of "laughter yoga." Attendees got up out of their chairs and literally made themselves laugh in rhythmic mantras like, "ho, ho, ha-ha-ha!" This turned into real laughter and the room bellowed with hoots and hollers.

VCRS Executive Director, Molly Boyer's face crinkled and turned pink as she heartily laughed with everyone, probably the loudest of all. One woman said to Boyer, "you're a good laugher!"

"I practiced!" Boyer giggled.

This was a follow up to Saffran's book re-release event at Fireside Books with a similar theme. To learn more about Hillary Saffran and her works, visit her website www.hillarysaffran.com or send her an email at Hillarys@akafs.org. You can also find her books and CDs on Amazon.com and at Fireside Books in Palmer.

LECTURE

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BCPP is on the intersection of breast cancer prevention and environmental health. We are exposed to hundreds of chemicals each day in our personal care products, our household and institutional cleaning products, in our food and even in our clothing. Carcinogens can be found in schools, homes, parks, in our air and our water. We can minimize these

exposures."

Katie Huffling RN, CNM, Executive Director of the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, will present on mobilizing the three million nurses practicing in the U.S. by educating them regarding environmental issues and health. "From pollution caused by hospitals, to chemicals in our air, water, food and products, nurses need to educate themselves and the patients they care for and the communities where they live, work, and play. Environmental Health is

rarely covered in nursing curriculum yet nurse educators want this information for themselves and their students." Nurses are the most trusted professionals in the United States, rated #1 for their honesty and integrity fifteen years in a row. They typically spend more time with patients than doctors do. Thus, they are in a perfect position to discuss breast cancer prevention with patients – as are community health aides, who play a critical role in health care in rural Alaskan communities.

