

Comedy show organizers hope to get people involved

Amy Smart / Times Colonist

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Jack Meredith and Rayna Graham act out a scene that will be included in Saturday's Laughing Allowed! show. Photograph By ADRIAN LAM, Times Colonist

Laughing Allowed! The Slapstick World of Neighbourhood Activism

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: High Point Church, 949 Fullerton Ave., Vic West

Admission: By donation

Sometimes it takes a little levity for dry issues to hit home. But when it comes to community engagement — or lack thereof — Will Weigler says there are some truly funny things to laugh about.

Weigler is the co-facilitator of Laughing Allowed! The Slapstick World of Neighbourhood Activism. The idea is to highlight, through physical comedy, some of the reasons why people don't participate in their neighbourhoods.

"We brought together a dozen people interested in the topic with a quirky sense of humour," Weigler said.

"The idea was not to make fun of [people], but to capture with comedy."

The event is organized as part of Building Resilient Neighbourhoods, a joint project between the Community Social Planning Council and Transitions Victoria.

Michelle Colussi, co-founder of Transitions Victoria, said Building Resilient Neighbourhoods is about encouraging adaptability.

“When we think about resilience, we think about the ability to respond and adapt to change,” Colussi said.

There are a number of changes facing both individuals and larger communities, from aging populations to climate change.

The organization is using Victoria West as a pilot project to work at the street level, offering small grants for neighbours to work together on projects.

Funding may go toward a street party, a community garden, community chicken coop or other ideas.

“The theatre project is just another experiment to say: OK, is there a way — by making volunteerism and being involved in community humorous — that we can soften the edges and get more people to put their toe in and test the water?” Colussi said.

“So we’re really using theatre to say, look, we need to laugh at ourselves. We have all this angst on a whole host of levels around volunteering in our communities, and things we love about it and things we really don’t love about it.”

Weigler led workshops in physical comedy for about a dozen community members. They came up with brief sketches inspired by both the things to love about a community and the “bumps” in the road to engagement, such as when you’re the only volunteer to show up at an event or you’re new to a group that isn’t particularly welcoming.

Most of the sketches involve minimal dialogue and are performed to a classical score. The first half of the event will be the performance, while the second half is dedicated to talking about community engagement.

“I would hope that we would start a conversation and make it OK for people to talk to each other in a more supportive way about some solutions,” Colussi said.

Weigler reiterated that the show is presented with good intentions.

“We don’t make fun of anyone,” Weigler said. “The tagline is: ‘It’s funny because it’s true.’ And that’s where we’re going — the laughter of recognition.”

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