

Looking for family entertainment? Showcase your talent at a family vaudeville show

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — The 2016 family and class reunions, summer entertainment, and the New Vaudevillians season at the WYO Theater are now in our rear-view mirror for the year but what about the upcoming holiday season, family gatherings and next summer?

If you are looking for an activity you can do at a family gathering, consider putting together a family or group vaudeville show. Vaudeville shows are a perfect venue for the talented and unusually talented participants.

A great family vaudeville show strives to include everyone who wants to participate. The rule is that the talented to the very silly is all acceptable and no booing or grimacing is allowed for off-key performers.

A vaudeville show by definition is a collection of unconnected performances, much like a talent show but without judging. Vaudeville shows were especially popular



COURTESY PHOTO |

Performers wait behind a makeshift curtain of sheets and clothesline for a Senior Center vaudeville show in Kendrick Park. Family and groups can organize their own vaudeville shows without a stage or curtains as a fun way to entertain and pass the time.

in America from the mid-1800s to early 20th century.

Depending on the size of your family or audience, a family vaudeville show can be performed in the family room, living room, church or whatever space you have access to. A larger venue during nice weather season can be done in a local park but you will need to reserve the space in advance with the city. A

permit gives you permission to use space should you show up and another group is where you want to be. The city will only issue one permit for space during a time slot so you won't have another group with a permit for the same place, date and time.

So, how do you get started to put together your family or group vaudeville show? First, plan ahead.

Assign a person known for their organization skills. A vaudeville show takes some advance planning and communication but is not a hard thing to organize for someone with such skills. This organizer needs to contact potential participants in advance to see if they're interested, what they may do and for them to prep ahead.

What kind of "acts" go in a vaudeville show? Of course, musicians, singers and dancers are included if you have them. Dancers would be limited to the space you have to perform. But you can also include others in poetry reading, short story-telling, magic tricks and jokes: the more performers, the more variety and fun. You'll find that many people want to participate but don't play an instrument or sing, so the organizer should have suggestions on hand when recruiting

performers. Ideas are available online.

The organizer will want to serve as the emcee or recruit someone else for this role. This is a great way to include someone who may not feel they have another talent to share. The emcee is the "glue" for the change of acts. The emcee's job would be to tell stories or jokes in-between the acts changing. If the emcee can sing, sometimes they will sing a song or two throughout the show.

The emcee's role is to introduce each act with the performer's name and what they will be doing. Emcees can also lead the group in a sing-along (have the words printed in advance on handouts for the audience) or ask three or four people in the audience to share a joke.

If there will be a range of ages in the audience, the organizer will want to be sure that the acts are family-friendly and that children are included in the performance. The organizer should ask the performers to include something for children if they can. Not all of the show, however, needs to be all-child friendly but should be acceptable to your gathering.

If you would like to learn about the history of vaudeville in America, one source is <http://xroads.virginia.edu>.

CENTER STAGE |

To be the best caregiver, don't go it alone

Did you know that every 71 seconds someone new is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease? There is not yet a cure for Alzheimer's disease, but research has discovered strategies, therapies and treatments throughout the course of the disease to help maximize the quality of life for all affected.

It is particularly difficult and stressful for families of Alzheimer's patients when they become the caregiver. Families quite often ask the question of, "How do I know if my loved one is experiencing symptoms of Alzheimer's?"

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) lists seven warning signs: 1. Memory loss — especially of recent events, names, placement of objects and new information. 2. Confusion — about time and place. 3. Struggling to complete familiar actions — such as brushing teeth or getting dressed. 4. Trouble finding the appropriate words, completing sentences and following directions and conversations. 5. Poor judgment when making decisions. 6. Changes in mood and personality — such as rapid and persistent mood swings, increased suspicions, withdrawal and disinterest in usual activities. 7. Difficulty with complex mental assignments — such as balancing a check book or other tasks involving numbers.

Most often the family physician is the best resource in helping the caregiver and loved one answer some of these questions. It is usually more stressful for all involved when you don't know what you're dealing with compared to knowing and moving forward in treatment and getting the support you need. There are screenings available and your physician will be the first place to start.

Caregivers often are so busy taking care of their loved ones that they ignore taking care of themselves. That does not help your loved one. Studies have shown that caregivers of people with Alzheimer's disease face more physical and mental health problems than any other caregivers. Stress is a major health hazard. The more tired and stressed you are, the more you put yourself at risk for various illnesses. Stress can impact your role as a caregiver, leaving you tired, unfocused and possibly in an irritable mood. Finding a little bit of time for yourself each day is very important to your own quality of life. Being active, following a good diet and getting enough sleep are just a few things you can do for yourself to be a better caregiver.

Let us help you. The Family Caregiver Support Program offers two support groups. It is very important to be around other people experiencing some of the same things you are going through; it validates your thoughts and feelings. We have found that a caregiver initially comes to seek support for themselves and often find that they have in turn been a support to others in the group.

During support group, a caregiver can bring their loved one to our Day Break program and feel confident that they are safe and being well cared for. Day Break is available five days a week — you (the caregiver) can take a break from your caregiver responsibilities and know that your loved one is in a place where all their needs are being met.

It is vital for the caregiver to give themselves time to meet their needs and when you know your loved one is being well cared for you are more likely to enjoy your time away from them. So come to our support group and let your loved one enjoy the socialization they need at our Day Break program.

For more information on our other programs and activities that can help you and your loved one, please give me a call at 675-1978 to set up an appointment to talk. Don't wait, ask for help and be the best caregiver you can be while maintaining your own health.

STELLA MONTANO is the director of the Family Caregiver Program at the Sheridan Senior Center. This article has been edited from its original publication on Aug. 29, 2009. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.



STELLA MONTANO



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Wed - Chicken Salad on Bed of Greens		Turkey Noodle
Thu - BBQ Pork Wing		Mexican Beef
Fri - French Dip/Au Jus		Pasta E' Fagioli
Sat- Turkey Pasta Salad (has nuts in salad)		

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Tue - Jammers	6:30 p.m.	Community Room
Wed - Hike with Sheridan Land Trust	9:00 a.m.	Meet in Senior Center Lobby
Thu - Snap, Crackle, Pop Yoga	5:30 p.m.	Community Room
Fri - Bridge	12:30 p.m.	Community Room
Sat - Biscuits & Gravy Breakfast	7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.	Dining Room

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SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS |

- Diabetes Education and Empowerment Class begins in September. This is a free six-week course designed for those living with diabetes or pre-diabetes. First class is on Sept. 19 and advance sign-up before the first class is required. Class size is limited. Sign up by stopping by the front desk at the Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St. Mondays through Fridays, 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. or by calling 672-2240 during these times.

- Learn effective strategies for weight release, empower your relationship with food, improve your nutrition knowledge and identify food and emotion connections impacting your weight goals. Join us for our weight release course begin-

ning Sept. 13, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Sheridan Senior Center. Class size is limited and pre-sign up by Sept. 8 is encouraged. For more information, contact Georgia Boley at 672-2240. The course is free and will run for six weeks.

- The Senior Center will be operating under holiday hours on Monday, Sept. 5 in observance of the Labor Day holiday. The hours for the center that day are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch will be served in the dining room at 211 Smith St. during its usual hours, 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Home delivered meals will be delivered. For more information, call Shirley Knisley at 672-6079. The Senior Center will re-open with full services on Tuesday, Sept. 6.