

Feldman puts spotlight on kindness

Acts of Kindness Cabaret

7 p.m. Saturday, April 24 at the Children's Chapel, Pine and Lincoln streets, Winnetka. "A Little Help From My Friends" to benefit The Women's Exchange. \$35, \$40 at the door. (847) 441-3406 for reservations (not required, but appreciated). www.acts-of-kindnesscabaret.org or www.women's-exchange.org.

By **LILLI KUZMA**
Contributor

Hilary Ann Feldman has always striven to be a kind person, stopping to help, lending a bit of change along with a smile. She's also an accomplished singer and cabaret artist. So it seems only natural that Feldman would found Acts of Kindness Cabaret, a nonprofit organization that assists other nonprofits in raising funds by providing largely free entertainment.

"Acts of Kindness Cabaret was prompted by my desire to do something useful," said Feldman. "At first, it was really just part-time, just meant to get together once or twice a

year. But, in 2005, I had a life-changing event when a very good friend of mine died of cancer, and I dumped things not important in my life, re-formed the idea and hit the ground running with new goals in place."

The group raises between \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year and has raised more than \$150,000 for beneficiaries such as homeless shelters, youth organizations, refugee placement and the Illinois Independent Living Center, Feldman said.

Acts of Kindness Cabaret will provide a benefit performance for The Women's Exchange April 24 in Winnetka. The show, "A Little Help From My Friends," will feature Feldman, Caryn Caffarelli of Wilmette and Caron Buinis of Hillside. Paul Hamilton will be the pianist.

"Each Act of Kindness show has three singers and a pianist, and we provide

the light and sound, a crew for set-up and tear-down, and offer a lot of peripheral help and guidance with publicity," said Feldman. "And all of the shows are designed to be family-friendly. When some people hear 'cabaret,' they think Liza Minnelli dancing on a table, but our shows are suitable for an 8-year-old, who might be bored, but there'd be nothing offensive."

Feldman grew up in Highland Park with English parents who exposed her to British folk and British music hall. Feldman has performed widely, and toured this past fall with "High Standards," a one-woman show with engagements in New York and London. She is a member of Chicago Cabaret Professionals, has served as musical director for over 20 musicals and reviews, and released an acclaimed album, "Taking Flight," in 2008.

Feldman spent a decade doing theater around Chicago before seeing her first cabaret show in 2000. Drawn to the storytelling aspect and the diverse music of the genre, she knew she had found her true artistic home.

"I like to do a wide range of music, folk to Beatles, jazz, Sondheim, old and new. With cabaret, there is a sense of beginning, middle and end. Cabaret artists communicate directly with the audience. There is no theatrical forced wall," she said.

The direct audience dynamic is sweetened at Act of Kindness Cabaret shows. During intermission, some members of the audience receive a Feldman-baked, homemade brownie, specially wrapped and with a tag that reads, "You are the recipient of a random act of kindness. Please pass it on."

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