

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT diversions

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Good songs support good deeds

'Life...Sunny Side Up'

Acts Of Kindness Cabaret, Skokie Theatre, 7924 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie. 8 p.m. Saturday, March 19. \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door; nonprofit representatives pay \$15 each or 2 for \$25. (847) 677-7761 or www.skokie theatre.org; nonprofits must call (847) 419-7664 to reserve discounted tickets. Contact Acts Of Kindness Cabaret at (847) 419-7664 or actsofkindnesscabaret.org.

By MYRNA PETLICKI
Contributor

A woman with a generous heart and an abundance of talent has combined her two gifts to make a difference for nonprofit organizations. Highland Park native Hilary Ann Feldman started Acts Of Kindness Cabaret in 2002, but it kicked into high gear in 2005.

The concept is simple. Her not-for-profit organization stages professional cabaret shows as fundraising events for other nonprofits, charging only for expenses and a tiny portion of ticket sales to keep the organization running. In addition to performers, the organization provides lighting, sound, a crew and programs. To date, Acts Of Kindness Cabaret has raised over \$165,000 for other nonprofits.

The organization will showcase what they do on Saturday night at the Skokie Theatre when they present "Life...Sunny Side Up." The show features Feldman, plus singers Caryn Caffarelli and Caron Buinis of Hillside. Paul Hamilton will provide piano accompaniment.

Bright outlook

"The theme, as you would guess from the title, is all about the bright side of life — lemons to lemonade kind of topics," Feldman said.

"It's a beautiful message," Buinis added. "When you're down and out, how to turn life around."

Buinis will sing a Kenny Rogers hit called "The Greatest," "And the World Goes 'Round" by Kander and Ebb, and Trisha Yearwood's "The Song Remembers When," among other selections.

"The music comes from all different genres. There'll be songs that people know really well; there'll be songs they've never heard of before," Feldman said. The two-act show includes theater music, standards, Beatles songs, folk tunes and more. There will be solos, duets and trios.

The purpose of the showcase is to dispel some myths about cabaret and show people what the Acts Of Kindness Cabaret entertainers do. "We'll be doing a full performance," Feldman said, "but we'll also have a chance to talk to the audience about how we work, how we can help — and how there can be no catch."

Starting Acts Of Kindness Cabaret filled a need for Feldman.

"I'm a musician so I don't make a lot of money," she said. "I always want to write checks to people, and I can't. I kept trying to figure out a way to use



Hilary Ann Feldman founded the Acts of Kindness Cabaret in 2002.

what I do in my life to give back."

Feldman soon discovered that it was easy recruiting other professional performers. "Many people out there want to help. They just need to be given an avenue," she said.

Giving back

Cabaret artist Buinis has performed with Acts Of Kindness Cabaret for three years. When Feldman asked her to join the organization, Buinis said, "The first thing that I thought was, 'Fabulous. Here's a built-in audience.' The second thing was, 'What a way to do what I love and to be able to give back.' Hilary has hit the jackpot with this."

New York native Buinis performed at some of her hometown's premier



Hilary Ann Feldman, (from left), Caryn Caffarelli and Caron Buinis on stage in the Acts of Kindness Cabaret.

cabaret venues before moving to this area, where she has continued to sing in cabarets. She will soon start rehearsals for a musical called "The Glorious Ones" at Illinois Theatre Center in Park Forest.

Feldman said that all the

performers who work with Acts Of Kindness Cabaret love being part of the organization. "We are put in touch with passionate, giving, caring people who are — like us — doing the best they can with what they have," Feldman said.

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