

Forest Leaves

The kindness of singers benefits worthy causes

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What's a person to do when they have a generous heart but limited financial resources? Cabaret artist Hilary Ann Feldman's answer is to donate her talent.

The Highland Park native and current Wheeling resident created Acts of Kindness Cabaret in 2005 to provide entertainment largely free of cost to nonprofit organizations for fundraising. So far, AOK Cabaret has raised \$212,000 for a variety of charitable organizations.

"We are open to helping any organization, except for political and religious organizations," Feldman said. "Our concern is that they are as committed as we are to making their event a success and that they have the means to do that."

Feldman and fellow Chicago cabaret artists Caryn Caffarelli and Marianne Murphy Orland will present a public performance Sunday, March 10 at Madison Street Theatre in Oak Park. Paul Hamilton is the accompanist.

"It's our annual showcase," Feldman said. "It's not a fundraiser for anybody. It's a chance for nonprofit representatives to see what we do and learn how we can help them." The general public is welcome, too.

The show is called, "A Little Help from My Friends." "It is the most requested show," Feldman reported. "It's a really big variety. Everything from Maltby and Shire's 'Three Friends' to the old standard, 'Me and My Shadow' to a song from 'Wicked' to a Beatles tune. There's something for everybody in it."

Caffarelli has been with AOK Cabaret for five years. "I was inspired by the idea of helping others through giving of my talent," the Wilmette resident said. "It seems like a good fit for me at this point in my life to be singing for worthy causes. It is humbling and gratifying at the same time to be able to sing for people, knowing that I'm helping other people."

Caffarelli will perform four solos: "As If We Never Said Goodbye" from "Sunset Boulevard," "The Other Side of the Tracks" from "Little Me," an obscure comedy song called, "I Was Beautiful," and a melding of two friendship songs, Carole King's "You've Got a Friend" and "You've Got a Friend in Me" from "Toy Story." Caffarelli will join her fellow singers to perform duets and trios, "from all different genres."

Caffarelli is a busy cabaret soloist and performs with Route 66, a female a cappella quartet. She is also a voice teacher, and has taught art, music, dance, theater and English.

Feldman has been performing as a solo cabaret artist for 10 years. She is currently working on a cabaret show, set to debut in May, that will be a tribute to Audrey Hepburn. In addition, Feldman works with approximately 20 vocal students each week.

Marianne Murphy Orland is also a long-time solo cabaret artist. She appears at Davenport's in Chicago every Friday night as well as singing with a couple of big bands.

Accompanist Hamilton is a busy pianist, composer and music director, as well as a coach and arranger. He has arranged over 25 productions for the Fireside Theatre in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

The four artists share a common goal. "We want to put cabaret out in the world and do some good," Feldman declared.