

Participants tap their funny bones at playshop

By Andrea Damewood

The Register-Guard

Published: Sunday, February 25, 2007

Leigh Anne Jasheway-Bryant presented her class with a pop quiz on Saturday: How many times a day does an average American adult laugh?

Do they laugh once, twice, 15 times, or only under nitrous? she asked.

A class clown called out, "nitrous!"

And while the answer is really 15, the facetious answer also holds true, Jasheway-Bryant said - daily life is often devoid of carefree moments. The average 5-year-old, she continued, laughs about 400 times daily.

What most adults need is a playshop, a place to learn to have fun again, said Jasheway-Bryant, a Eugene resident who presents her motivational and humorous playshops nationwide.

Her red hair in pigtails with mismatched ties, Jasheway-Bryant uses anecdotes, stand-up comedy and a whole lot of group participation in "Digging Up Your Funny Bone: A playshop for grown-ups who are ready to get in touch with their inner pup (or kitten)."

The afternoon event was a laugh-a-thon for the nearly 50 people who gathered at the Eugene Red Lion Hotel to learn humor techniques and to raise about \$1,000 for the Willamette Animal Guild and the Shelter Animal Resource Alliance, better known as S.A.R.A.

Reminding her charges to look for the humorous side in stressful situations, Jasheway-Bryant recounted a tale of a man who cut her off in traffic, making an unsavory gesture as he did so.

"Of course, this being Eugene, he had this bumper sticker," she said. "And do you know what it said? It said, 'Mean people suck!' And I was like, 'Yeah, they sure do!'"

Spreading Frisbees, toys, crayons and silly hats around the hotel ballroom until it resembled a small child's bedroom, Jasheway-Bryant called on her audience to participate in dares.

After answering a multiple-choice question wrong, a man and a woman donned giant neon goofy glasses and struggled to recall the lyrics to "I'm a Little Teapot."

Moving to the floor, Jasheway-Bryant's merriment-seekers worked to create new sayings from fractured cliches printed on small slips of paper.

Eugene resident Jody Irwin said that after undergoing four surgeries in the last year for an auto-immune disease, she'd been losing her ability to laugh, but the playshop provided a much-needed lift.

"I was mostly able to make jokes about it, but I started losing my ability to make fun," she said. "So I decided to do this. I think a lot of it has to do with looking at things from a different perspective."

Irwin later doubled over in a full belly-laugh as her comedy comrades read aloud some of their creations: "When the going gets tough, why go home again"; "The acorn doesn't fall up my skirt"; and "Errors have been made, but I take a pill for that now."

S.A.R.A.'s executive director, Diana Robertson, said that while rewarding, helping the area's limitless supply of homeless animals often feels daunting.

Jasheway-Bryant "is very right that we take things so seriously - it's so important to de-stress and have fun," Robertson said. "I'm going to try and take some time for fun, some with my companion animals and some with my friends."