

Consensual Improv entertains and teaches Valley's comedy fans

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Andrew Travers

Improv troupe began offering classes in 2022

Consensual Improv, the locally based comedy troupe running since 2016, has weathered the pandemic and emerged with a broadening mission to teach improvisational tactics and spread the gospel of "yes, and."

The group will perform Saturday night at the Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW) and on Monday will launch a four-week improv workshop as part of an expanding community education program.

"We want to serve audiences and create more laughter, create more joy and more connection in general," founding member Cassidy Willey said.

The troupe kept working through every phase of the pandemic, performing virtual shows through channels like the YouTube-based Carbondale First Friday online events at the height of the spring 2020 lockdowns. They also kept meeting weekly on Wednesdays through it all to practice improvisation games together — the lifeblood of any improv group — first virtually,



Consensual Improv will perform Saturday at the Arts Campus at Willits. (Courtesy Consensual Improv)

then outdoors, then inside and masked until they could get back to something like normal.

They did not perform publicly for a live audience from March 8, 2020 — when they played the Collective in Snowmass Base Village — until September 2021.

But since the fall they've performed regularly, and since the new year they've been growing the ranks of local improvisers through workshops at TACAW — both one-offs for locals looking to give improv a try and the full four-week run.

Those workshops, led by Willey, have proved popular — becoming a venue for the midvalley community

to regenerate in-person connections as the pandemic wanes. The classes have also turned out to be something like a farm team for the troupe.

"We've actually asked some of the standouts from those workshops to join us for one of the games at performances," cast member Ryan Honey said. "We're excited to showcase the talents of some of the new folks that Cassidy has been training."

Improv training opportunities are a staple of most populous communities in the U.S. but didn't make it to the Roaring Fork Valley — other than an occasional Second City program at Aspen Ideas Festival and Aspen Laugh

Festival — until the Consensual crew started them this year. Willey stresses that they can be a creative outlet for anyone, while the cooperative aspect of improv can also help with interpersonal relationships.

“It’s such a great way to live,” Willey said. “I feel like everyone could take an improv call and get a lot out of it.”

The group has also become a wellspring of local creativity, leading to Willey’s 2021 one-woman show “As Close as I Can” and the emergence of Honey and cast member Miller Ford as regularly performing stand-up comedians at local venues. Other cast members include the local theater veterans Gerald DeLisser, Nina Gabianelli and Mike Monroney, who have had recent roles in productions from Aspen Community Theatre, the Aspen Fringe Festival and Glenwood Vaudeville Revue.

That performance work outside of Consensual Improv has, in turn, improved the troupe’s work.

“That’s been really generative for the group because we come back with new energy and new experiences that we want to continue feeding our audience continue feeding one another,” Willey said.

Six years into its life, and nearing the other side of the pandemic’s disruptions, Honey said he thinks the troupe is doing its best and funniest shows yet.



Consensual Improv will perform Saturday at the Arts Campus at Willits. (Courtesy Consensual Improv)

“Consensual Improv really is a family,” Honey said. “We love each other. We’ve been there for each other through a bunch of life changes that we faced as individuals and collectively. Creatively, COVID was definitely challenging. A lot of us are very fed by the energy of performing. But coming back to live performances was that much more exciting, and that much more explosive.”

