

UB Welcomes First Female Comedian

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Written by Kristina Peters
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It was life as a comedian or life as a 911 operator for Alysia Wood.

Wood was looking for a job when she was offered a position as a 911 operator. At the time, however, her mind was on comedy.

"While interviewing, I realized the hours at 911 would've prevented me trying comedy. Now or never," she said.

At first, life as a comedian was not easy for Wood. Her first performance at an open mic night was anything but smooth.

Wood read joke-writing books to write her set and then memorized it, but she said that she was over prepared.

"Onstage, I realized it was crap," Wood said. "I got a mix of nervous, pity laughs. So I panicked and talked about how nervous, uncomfortable I was which got a huge laugh."

The huge laugh came from a crowd of eight but it inspired Wood to stick with comedy.

"That one honest laugh got me hooked," she said. "I told my friend, 'That sucked! I can't wait to do it again!'"

Wood has been a comedian since 1998 and has expanded her audience from open mic nights to colleges, clubs, coffee houses, bars and international youth hostels.

"My motto is, I tell jokes where jokes are told," she said.

It was just last year when Wood added colleges to her list of venues, and Eastern is on that list. She said she enjoys the college audience.

"They laugh at the jokes but also understand the point comics are trying to make," Wood said. "They catch the little nuances that others don't."

Wood will perform at 9 tonight in 7th Street Underground as part of University Board's comedy acts.

"People should come see my show because it's funny, and I don't know what's going to happen either," she said. "I show up with a rough outline, but thanks to my ADD, it never goes according to plan."

UB comedy coordinator Gretchen Claypool said, "I'm very picky when it comes to choosing comedians and I think she's fantastic. She was just full of energy."

Claypool told Keith Alberstadt, who was the first comedian to perform at Eastern this semester, that it was difficult to find good female comedians. Alberstadt suggested Wood.

"Doing a little networking is how I found her," Claypool said.

Wood is the first female comedian that Claypool has booked during her time as comedy coordinator and hopes people like the show.

"I'm hoping people are not judgmental about the show," she said.

Claypool thinks that attendees will appreciate that her jokes are different from other comedians.

However, when asked what topics Wood covers in the show, she could not sum it up because she includes a variety.

"I talk about everything, but I do try to talk about things that haven't been done to death," Wood said. "I will turn anything that strikes me as funny into a joke or funny story."

Although Wood can turn almost anything into a joke, she started small by renting standup tapes.

"I had a lot of free, unsupervised time. When I wasn't getting into trouble, I was renting standup videos and memorizing them, pulling them apart and putting them back together the same way my brother dissected the VCR," she said. "I wasn't funny at a young age, but I was always a comedy mimic and fan."

As a child, Wood was not always known as a funny person despite having a father who told jokes constantly.

"My father always told jokes and stories, so I grew up watching and listening to standup endlessly," she said. "(However,) as a kid, I was painfully shy. I wasn't known as a funny person until I was a teenager."
