

Local laughs: Clemson Comedy kicks off Wednesday

BY JASON EVANS

THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — One of Clemson's newest restaurants will be the home of a monthly comedy show.

Clemson Comedy will kick off Wednesday at Amici Restaurant. The restaurant opened Jan. 8.

Host Tom Emmons said the comedy showcase was previously based in Anderson but had been looking for a new home since the fall.

"The owner of Amici is excited about bringing comedy to Clemson," Emmons said. "It's a great location, right across from campus."

Amici general manager Ferrante Johnson is a big fan of local comedy.

"I'm an outgoing, love-to-laugh kind of person," he said.

He and his brother, Antonio, began connecting with local comedians while putting together their Laughs for Lupus fundraiser in Anderson. The fundraiser benefits the Lupus Foundation.

"I said, 'I'm doing this fundraiser, but I want to start doing comedy on a normal basis,'" Johnson said.

The Anderson comedy

showcase was a weekly event. Johnson said he would love to see Clemson Comedy become a weekly series as well.

"We want to test the waters and see what kind of response we get," he said.

The Anderson showcase brought in comics who appeared on Jimmy Kimmel and Conan O'Brien's television shows.

Johnson hopes comedians traveling between gigs in Charleston and Charlotte will stop in for sets in Clemson.

"There's a lot of good comics in this area," Johnson said. "We've got a lot of natural talent already. Not a lot of household names, but funny, funny people."

Amici will host Clemson Comedy the first Wednesday of each month. Shows begin at 8 p.m.

The show will be a mix of seasoned performers, along with an open mic session.

"For anybody interested in trying to do comedy, it's a great format for that," Emmons said. "For the audience, you're guaranteed quality performers."

The lineup for Wednesday's show includes Emmons, Jas Gill, Craig Holcombe, Brandon Rainwater and Art Sturtevant.

"They are some of the best

performers in the Upstate," Emmons said. "Some of us have been doing this for upward of 10 years. Jas is relatively new. She's been performing maybe less than two years. She's naturally funny. She's been harnessing and honing that into quite a memorable performance."

Holcombe should be familiar to comedy fans in the Clemson and Central areas. He hosted the comedy nights at Dakota's Courtyard Sports Grille in Central.

An Easley resident, Holcombe has been performing standup for more than a decade.

Sturtevant hails from Fletcher, N.C. His comedy career has taken him all over the country, including Catch a Rising Star, NYC's Comedy Cellar and the Laugh Your Asheville Off Comedy Festival.

Rainwater has opened for Dick Gregory, Anthony Johnson and Chris Kattan.

Gill, Holcombe, Rainwater and Sturtevant all perform regularly at the Comedy Zone in Greenville, where Emmons is the house emcee.

"There'll be a lot of talent, a lot of stage time behind the show," Emmons said. "It'll be a fun, polished comedy show. That makes it that much better for somebody

who's new. If you're 19 or 20 and trying comedy for the first time, it'll be a room that's not so cold. There's already a good cast of characters that's been on stage. That can make a difference to an audience."

The mixed format will help sidestep some of the pitfalls of open mic sessions by providing a warm environment for audiences and newbie comics alike.

"Some open mics can be weird and awkward," Emmons said. "We try and avoid that."

Johnson agreed.

"I'm hoping we'll get some college kids that are interested in comedy," he said. "We hope to reach some improv people."

The show is free to attend. A tip jar will be set up, with tips distributed to that night's seasoned comedians.

"For free, you can't beat it," Johnson said.

The show will also feature some giveaways.

"We'll have some prizes," Emmons said.

The hosts don't want visitors to feel like they have to dress up. Wednesday's show is also a pajama party.

A gift card will go to the winner of the "ugliest pajamas" contest.

"It's an added layer of humor," Emmons said of the contest. "We thought we'd better do it now, because in a couple of months it will be too warm."

Amici held its official ribbon cutting Wednesday morning. The restaurant employs 40 people, Johnson said.

"My philosophy, when you have the space such as we have, is you have to show it off as much as you can," he said. "Any chance we get, let's try to do some different things and get people talking. And comedy is definitely one of those things, because you're not getting it unless you're in a bigger city."

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Clemson Chamber of Commerce chair Kimberly Renaud, Amici owner Chris Torino, general manager Ferrante Johnson and Amici owner Zack Markwell cut the ribbon at Amici on Wednesday morning.

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FEBRUARY 7 - 8PM



Hosted by
Tom Emmons



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