

"SOUTH DAKOTA'S NEVER HAD A COMEDY FESTIVAL, AND I THOUGHT, LET'S GIVE IT A SHOT."



## >> COMEDY FOR A CAUSE: SNO JAM COMEDY FESTIVAL

BY MONICA ALBERS

**WINTER IN SOUTH DAKOTA HAS BROUGHT BONE-CHILLING TEMPERATURES, SUB-ZERO WINDCHILLS, AND PILES OF SNOW ALREADY THIS SEASON, BUT THAT'S NOT STOPPING 30 COMEDIANS FROM TRAVELING ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO COLLECT SOME SIOUX FALLS LAUGHS. IN FACT, SNO JAM COMEDY FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS SAY THEY'RE USING "OLD MAN WINTER" TO CHALLENGE COMICS TO SUPPORT A CAUSE CLOSE TO THEIR HEARTS - AND COMICS ARE PROVING THEMSELVES UP TO THE TASK.**

A **three-day festival held in Sioux Falls**, Sno Jam is the first event of its kind in South Dakota. Co-creators Dan Bublitz Jr. and Nathan Hults were among the team who narrowed down more than 100 submissions from around the country to a **six-show event of 30 comics** this month. All proceeds from the event will go to the **Special Olympics of South Dakota**.

"We wanted to bring comics here in the middle of the winter when no one else wants to come here," said Hults. "We wanted a festival that's in the dead of winter in the worst place to be. So a lot of these people will never come back."

**Fernson on 8th, Wacko's Comedy Club** and **Total Drag** have opened their doors to the festival, which takes place **February 16-18**. Audiences can enjoy both stand-up routines and themed showcases, sharing performers' talents for storytelling and improv.

And if South Dakota's winter provides another sudden snowstorm, they say the show will go on - with no shortage of talented alternates to fill in the gaps.

With the opening of Wacko's Comedy Club in August 2016, the event arrives

in a growing area comedy scene. In addition to comics from as far away as San Diego and New York, seven local names have been selected for the line-up, providing new learning opportunities for performers.

"It's a good time to go network with other comics, so that's kind of the appeal to come to a festival," said Bublitz. "You get to go perform in a different area, you meet other comics and network with other comics, and you're supporting a good cause."

Organizers are glad to be a part of the area's growth.

"In college when I studied theater, they told me that if you're in South Dakota, you have to create your own opportunities. You have to do art where you are," explained Hults. "South Dakota's never had a comedy festival, and I thought, let's give it a shot."

Passion soon met purpose. The project became one to raise funds and awareness. As someone with family members with special needs, Hults says he's always had a soft spot for this particular organization, and a list of charities was soon narrowed down. Hults calls the festival a "party for the Special Olympics." They hope to make it a winter tradition.

"We love comedy so much," said Hults. "We like to do it, and when you can do it to help someone else, it's just a great feeling."

**Tickets can be purchased online and are recommended to purchase soon due to the small size of some of the venues. Tickets are \$10 a night, and a VIP all-access pass goes for \$50. For complete scheduling information and ticket sales, visit [siouxfallssnojамcomedyfest.com](http://siouxfallssnojамcomedyfest.com).**