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Learning the Joy of Improv Acting at The Palace at Coral Gables

BY COMMUNITY NEWS RELEASES

Improbable actors are discovering newfound talents at The Palace at Coral Gables' Improv workshop. Offered once a week at the senior living community, Improv is taught by Chris Heiberger from Hashtag Comedy Co. in Columbus, Ohio, via the Zoom platform. About 8 to 10 residents have been participating in the hour-long classes.

"We're always seeking opportunities for residents to be intellectually challenged and have fun," said social director Pamela Parker. "The pandemic made us more reliant on Zoom and offering the workshop classes was a perfect fit. Initially, some residents were skeptical, but as soon as they tried the class they were hooked."

Initially, Heiberger introduced the participants to the basic tenets of Improv, learning to say yes to anything, support your teammates, actively listen and trust your gut. Then they learned how to build a scene, create characters and interact with each other. No memorization is required, but practicing the improv skills is needed.

"Improv is an art form that makes something out of nothing," said Heiberger. "We gear the classes to having fun while offering life skills that are beneficial for everyone."

Each class provides structure, exercises and teamwork. Heiberger finds as residents' confidence grows, they work better together. Most importantly, they begin to feel more at home in their own skin and gain stage presence.

According to Heiberger, it's been unique dealing with a group of people who live in the same building and frequently see each other.

"Though they are neighbors, through the Improv classes, they are learning



The Palace at Coral Gables residents Margaret Steele, Byron "Mike" Berezin, and Jacqueline Adelson. (l - r)

this is a safe place and a time where they can be silly. As their comfort level grows, you can see them laugh more and more at themselves and each other. Adults seem to lose this ability, and through improv, this is rediscovered. The students are learning they don't have to be in control. No matter what is thrown at you, it's important to be in the moment."

He believes this is a technique that carries over into everyday life, and when practiced, make people a better parent, friend and human.

Recently, Heiberger had an opportunity to visit The Palace and surprised his students by appearing in person for a class. He has been amazed at how well they embraced technology using Zoom, but it was so much fun to meet them in person and

get to really know them better.

Heiberger is finding teaching the group, whose average age is 87, very inspiring and he's frequently telling his friends about his students.

"One gentleman is 93. In addition to taking the Improv workshop, he's taking banjo lessons just because he wants to try something new. That's pretty incredible to me; talk about a role model," he said.

The Palace at Coral Gables is an Independent and Assisted Living Community for active retirement living with luxurious amenities and services. To learn more about The Palace at Coral Gables, please call 305-445-7444 or visit www.PalaceCoralGables.com.