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Peninsula Behavioral Health hosts comedian Boosler at respite center fundraiser

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PORT ANGELES — It took Elayne Boosler only a few seconds before she had her crowd laughing and applauding.

“If there's a schizophrenia problem here, I'd blame it on the weather,” the comedian said early in her set at the annual Peninsula Behavioral Health banquet Friday night.

The \$85-a-plate fundraiser at the Red Lion Hotel was sold out, and Boosler, the well-traveled comic, author and animal-rescue advocate, dished out an hourlong performance plus a donation of her own.

Addressing Peninsula Behavioral's mental health therapists, Boosler joked about what's considered “normal.”

“Normal is someone you've only known for five minutes,” she declared, before taking a headlong run through her topics: becoming an invisible woman — that men don't see, anyhow — after age 50; shopping for coffins at Costco where “you have to buy six;” and that disjointed female inside the car's global positioning system.

After a spot-on imitation of the robotic voice, Boosler asked: For male drivers, wouldn't it be more effective to have a sexy woman purring the directions?

“Guess what's coming up . . . a left . . . we're going to make it together,” this GPS guide could breathe. Then the men would listen.

Grocery shopping takes Boosler forever these days. It's not the buying of the food, but the reading of it — is this fat-free and fairly traded? — that immobilizes her because “I want responsibly sourced Twinkies.”

Boosler skewered the nation's anti-immigrant factions, saying she'd gather up the sushi chefs, foreign-born cab drivers and Jewish movie producers and create her own country based on tolerance. She'd call it “America Classic.”

For her closing riff, Boosler cut to major league baseball, delivering a mock play-by-play with brand-name advertising.

Every move, each player and every inch of the stadium was brought to you by CVS Pharmacy, Verizon and scores of other marketeers.

After a standing ovation for Boosler, Peninsula Behavioral Health Medical Director Joshua Jones took the stage to ask for help.

The agency wants to establish a Clallam County respite center, a six-bed refuge for people suffering from intense depression or other psychiatric issues.

It would keep such local residents from being held at Olympic Medical Center and from having to go to a facility such as Western State Hospital in Pierce County, Jones said.

Then Peninsula Behavioral Health board Vice President Laura O'Neal brought Boosler back on stage, and the women proceeded to ask for contributions.

They flowed forth: One donor pledged \$5,000, others \$2,500, \$1,000, \$500 and \$100.

Boosler broke in, offering her earrings for auction. Hands rose rapidly, with Jim Hallett, a Port Angeles financial consultant and a Port of Port Angeles commissioner, making the winning bid of \$500.

"You've got to live large," Hallett said as his wife, Joanne, put on her new earrings for a picture with Boosler.

Fundraising done, the comedian stayed long after, signing autographs and posing for photo after photo.

O'Neal, also a comedian who performs locally, persuaded Boosler — a hero of hers — to come to Port Angeles.

And Boosler praised Peninsula Behavioral Health's range of local services, saying that good things come from the ground up, at the community level.

Peninsula Behavioral, formerly known as Peninsula Community Mental Health, offers counseling, support and medical services for adults, families and youths as well as help for people in crisis due to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress or illness.

Much more information is available by phoning 360-457-0431 and visiting www.peninsulabehavioral.org.

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