

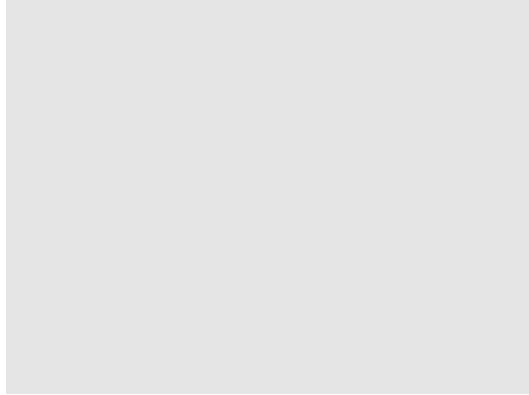
B'nai Jeshurun's men's club virtual comedy night to benefit food banks

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Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ed Weinstein has been thinking up ways to benefit his community and also bring a little laughter into people's lives.

Weinstein originally had the idea to put on a 1950s-themed "Catskills" charity night at his synagogue, B'nai Jeshurun Congregation in Pepper Pike, presented by the men's club.

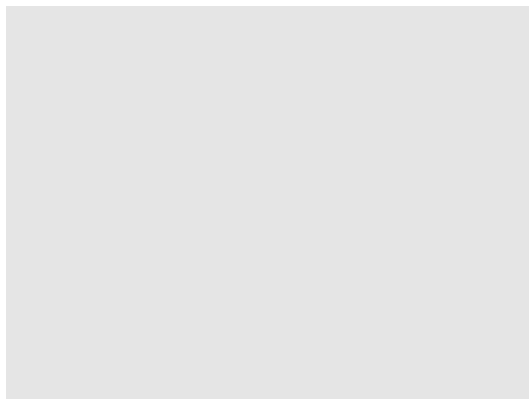
The idea got shelved due to COVID-19 restrictions, but it turned into the idea for the "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Food Bank" virtual comedy benefit on Feb. 13.



Weinstein

“This is a program I’ve been contemplating for a few years now,” said Weinstein, a Shaker Heights resident who is also the entertainment coordinator for the event. “Our men’s club officers agreed to put full efforts into putting this together with me once I presented the concept. I feel so fortunate to have their expertise.”

The event’s proceeds will benefit a number of local and national food banks, including the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and the Cleveland Kosher Food Pantry. The Mid-Ohio Foodbank will also receive support, with the help of Mark Rosenson, president of Congregation Tifereth Israel’s men’s club in Columbus.



Brodsky

“Ed brought this to us, and our officers gathered and agreed that it was time to pull together to support the needs of our food banks, and what better way to do that during this pandemic than a night of comedy,” Jerry Brodsky, president of the B’nai Jeshurun’s men’s club, said. “Ed was the ringleader, but the event wouldn’t be what it’s going to be

without the added work of Mitch Lauer, Dr. Chad Cohen, David Cohen, Harvey Wasserman and our marketing guru, Joel Herman.”

The show will feature comedy sets by Chicago’s Sy Jacobs, and T.J. Shanoff and Katie Klein of The Shalom Collaboration; New York City’s Ester Steinberg and Ali Kolbert; Louisville, Ky.’s Mark Klein; Washington, D.C.’s Ian Bardenstein; and Cleveland’s Josh Kramer.

Weinstein credited his wife, Michele Cydulka-Weinstein, and children, Anna, Jonah and Gabe, for the idea of selecting those comedians.

“We talked to all of the talent as well as communicated over email,” Weinstein said. “I approached each potential performer and sold them on the show, finding it was an easy sell when I said we were raising money for food banks. We’re grateful to all of the comics who agreed.”

Congregation Tifereth Israel became involved when the B’nai Jeshrun men’s club wanted to reach Central Ohio. It took less than five minutes into a Zoom call with members for his men’s club to be on board, Rosenson said.

“Especially during the pandemic, I’m so tired of hearing all of the things you can’t do,” he said. “I am looking for the things we can do. The reality is, I knew a good thing when I heard it. Not only is it good for our community and the food banks, but it brings live entertainment into people’s homes. And I like that.”

But organizers said they’re just thankful for the opportunity to support local food banks, especially during the pandemic.

“It’s a terrific way to spend a Saturday night during COVID-19,” Weinstein said. “The second thing is that registration fee is going directly to these charities, while we politely ask throughout the night for other donations. This is so the food banks in Cleveland and Columbus will be able to perform their vital function through these tough times.”

Brodsky added, “We know during this pandemic that there are some folks in need of food and the services that the food banks provide. It struck us that we had this idea of a comedy night percolating and right now that it would be a perfect opportunity to give people the chance to be philanthropic. We see the lines of cars in every city to pick up food, so we wanted to allow ourselves and the community to help.”

The Cleveland Jewish News is a media partner of the event.