

# LAUGHING MATTERS

Martin Short Takes the Stage at Boys & Girls Club Fundraiser

BY RENEE BRINCKS

**T**he fabulously funny Martin Short made a name for himself with some of comedy's most memorable characters. There's Ed Grimley, the awkward, pop culture-obsessed personality with greased-up hair; Jiminy Glick, the eccentric, chatty celebrity interviewer known to make even the most poised personalities giggle. And, of course, the unforgettable wedding planner Franck Eggelhoff, who shared the screen with Steve Martin's George Banks in "Father of the Bride."

Short's comedic work on Second City Television won him a Primetime Emmy, together with John Candy, Eugene Levy and other colleagues, and the former "Saturday Night Live" cast member returned to host the show in December. But Short got his start on stage, performing in Canadian productions of "Macbeth" and "Godspell." Years later, he won a Tony for his role in the Broadway presentation of "Little Me." The versatile actor and comedian is also a writer and producer, and he has voiced several animated screen characters—including that of the Jester in the soon-to-be-released film, "Dorothy of Oz."

After 40 years in show business, how does he stay so fresh and entertaining?

"I like the eclectic nature of it all," says Short, speaking by phone from Southern California. "For me, it's not by doing one thing. It's by doing an arc in 'How I Met Your Mother,' or an arc in 'Weeds,' or one season of 'Damages.' Or concerts. Or benefits.

Or things that you can just do and say, at the end of the month, 'Boy, I've had a very eclectic month.'"

Short will mix it up again this March 23, when he headlines the 20th annual Comics for Kids event. The featured performer promises what he calls "a party with Marty"—singing, dancing, comedy sketches, improvisation and more—during the gala and auction

that raises money for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County.

"I've always been drawn to this charity. It's so spectacular in what it accomplishes and what it attempts," says Short.

The local Boys & Girls Club chapter boasts an especially impressive array of accomplishments. Its staff members and volunteers work with as many as 1,000 underserved Monterey County students a day at clubhouses in Seaside and Salinas, and through on-site school programs that target elementary, middle and high school



**Actor, comedian, producer, writer and singer Martin Short headlines the 20th annual Comics for Kids event, which raises funds for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County.**

participants. The outreach encourages good citizenship, character development, healthy living and academic success.

This year, the nonprofit celebrates 100 years of impact, explains Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County CEO and President Donna Ferraro.

"It's our 20th anniversary of Comics for Kids, it's our 25th anniversary of Golf for Kids, it's our 45th anniversary as an organization, and it's our 10-year anniversary of opening the Salinas unit," she says. "These are really incredible milestones for the organization."

Most recently, local Boys & Girls Club leaders have focused on ways to serve larger audiences without committing resources to new facilities. Three school-based extension programs in Salinas have extended the organization's reach. North Monterey County Unified School District administrators are exploring similar partnerships, as well.

North Monterey County Superintendent Kari Yeater saw the positive results of such collaborations during her six years as associate superintendent for Monterey Peninsula Unified Schools. She emphasizes that the Boys & Girls Club provides more than just a safe place for students to go while their parents are at work.

"They look at the student and family on a continuum from cradle to career," she says. "It's a reputable organization that provides high expectations for students."

As an example, Yeater references an elementary school program

and receive assistance with college and financial aid applications. Once they complete an undergraduate degree, former Boys & Girls Club participants often return to share their experiences with former classmates. That kind of individual student success routinely makes a wider social and economic impact, observes Yeater.

"It can change a whole community, and the whole family dynamic, when you have these students who lead the way," she says.

Inspiring students to dream big and supporting them as they make those dreams a reality requires the assistance of more than just Boys & Girls Club staff and volunteers. Ferraro recalls a new volunteer who, while touring the nonprofit's facilities for the first time, recognized the real chal-



**With three children of his own, and personal experience working with underprivileged youth, Short understands what the encouragement of organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club can mean for young people.**

designed to boost literacy and technology skills. The curriculum entices children to practice reading while they also design, write, illustrate and publish their own books. Another initiative offers tutoring and mentoring services to middle schoolers, encouraging them to explore personal interests and career ideas. In high school, those same teens meet with tutors

gather members of that supporting village together to celebrate. Twenty years after its first presentation, the event continues to build community awareness and generate crucial funds for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County. Approximately 700 guests are expected in 2013, which is more than three times the number who attended the debut event two

lunge of coordinating so many programs.

"She was looking around and she said, 'I know people say that it takes a village to raise a child. But nowadays, it takes a village to support that village,'" says Ferraro.

Comics for Kids is one way to



**The Boys & Girls Clubs' programs include sports, arts classes, character building, and education and career guidance. The mission statement is "to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens."**

decades ago. And organizers hope to top the \$350,000 raised during last year's Comics for Kids through a mix of tax-deductible ticket sales and related festivities.

Guests can expect a stellar lineup of entertainment for the anniversary event. Co-hosting with Short will be local news anchors Jasmine Viel and Marc Cota-Robles. A number of Boys & Girls Club participants are planning musical performances and presentations. The schedule also includes a cocktail reception, dinner, wine pairings and a dessert bar, plus prize drawings and live and silent auctions.

Comics for Kids' longevity and sell-out popularity speak to the level of local engagement inspired by the Boys & Girls Club.

"The significance of our 20th anniversary, and the significance of all of our milestones this year, is really that this organization was built on the shoulders of the community," Ferraro says. "We could have all these ideas for how to support young people, but without support, and without the communi-

ty's belief in all that is possible for our kids, it would never happen."

With three children of his own, and personal experience working with underprivileged youth, Short understands what the encouragement of organizations such as the Boys & Girls Club can mean for young people.

"I think that any cycle can be broken," he says. "One has to look to the greatest achievers in our society, the ones who have maybe not been handed so many things from the beginning, and really wonder how

they did it and what motivated them. Ultimately, look for a high-level role model and say, 'I'm going to aspire to that.'"

*The Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County presents its 20th annual Comics for Kids fundraiser on Saturday, March 23, 2013, beginning at 5:30pm. The event takes place at the Pebble Beach Food & Wine Grand Tasting Tent at Portola Road*



**The 2012 Comics for Kids event at Pebble Beach Food and Wine. This year's event takes place March 23rd in the Grand Tasting Tent at PBFW, located at Portola Road and Stevenson Drive.**

*and Stevenson Drive. Tickets, which include dinner and entertainment, cost \$300/person (\$165 of that cost is tax deductible). For tickets and information, visit [www.bgcmc.org](http://www.bgcmc.org) or call 831/394-5171.*