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# Laughter is the best (cash) medicine

The Boston Globe

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Business is booming, says comedian Jimmy Kimmel. (Photo by Michael O'Connell for the Globe)

By Julie Masis  
Globe Correspondent / March 29, 2009

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**Page 2 of 2 --** D'Angelo said he's just as busy now as ever, and even has had to turn down some show requests.

Comedians Jimmy Tingle and Dave Rattigan are also keeping their schedules booked with fund-raisers.

Tingle, resident comic at Arlington's Regent Theatre, which recently offered its 140 balcony seats to nonprofit charities for fund-raising, said business is going great despite the economic downturn.

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"People might not be buying a house or a new car," he said, but "they are thoroughly enjoying live comedy."

Tingle remembers telling jokes for two friends with cancer, who have since died. It was "to lift spirits and raise some money," he said.

Rattigan, a comedian for 14 years and a part-time freelance writer, says he has told jokes on behalf of a Methuen man who was seriously injured when a tree fell on him, and has also raised money for a police dog that was going blind and a family who were building a wheelchair ramp for their house.

"If they're crying at the beginning, it makes it hard to do a comedy show," he said. "But if they're crying at the end, you probably really haven't done your job."

Hard evidence of comedy's draw regionwide is not available, but producers like Mike Smith, owner of Laugh Riot Productions in Salem, N.H., said his company has booked about 30 percent more comedy fund-raisers this year than by this time in previous years. And most of his shows sell out in advance, he said.

"Even during the Great Depression, sporting events, theaters, and vaudeville shows continued to do well because people need that escape," said Smith. "Everybody loves to laugh. And any time you're laughing, you can't feel sick, sore, tired, or concerned about the economy."

It's no surprise some restaurant operators are capitalizing on laughter.

The Bull Run Restaurant in Shirley, Brewery Exchange in Lowell, and Max Stein's Steakhouse in Lexington are among a number of area establishments that started monthly comedy nights this winter, while the Parker House Grille in Dracut will have its first comedy event on Saturday.

Todd Verdonck, comedy manager at Kitty's Restaurant in North Reading, which started monthly comedy in 2008, said the last show at the eatery sold out its 140 seats.

"Now is the time where restaurants really have to get creative in terms of giving people a reason to come out," said Lisa Knight, producer of the 5 Funny Female Comedy Tour, established about a year ago.

The Funny Female show sold out at Max Stein's Steakhouse in January, Knight said.

"We're seeing an upswing of people who want to come out and have a good laugh." ■

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