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Feel-good event benefits 'reel' good cause

Comedy show to raise funds for film festival to be held next April

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Inside Bay Area

Article Last Updated: 11/15/2006 02:36:45 AM PST

PLEASANTON — A night of comedy will benefit the California Independent Film Festival Association this evening, which puts on film festivals in Livermore and Danville each year.

The association, which runs the California Independent Film Festival and the Danville International Children's Film Festival, will host "Comedy Fest for Films" with Laugh-A-Lot Productions.

Local comedian John DeKoven will play host at the event, which will feature comedian Albert Vallejo and other special guests.

"Hopefully we'll get a good turnout," said Tim Neeley, festival director. "It should be fun, so we're looking forward to it."

As for attendance, this year's eighth annual California Independent Film Festival had a better turnout than ever. Special events sold out, and film screenings were packed.

"There's no doubt that we had a lot of people there," Neeley said. "It was just amazing."

The comedy night likely will be one of several upcoming fundraisers for the film festival, which will be held next April instead of October.

The 2006 festival ended Oct. 29, giving organizers less than six months to plan an event that usually takes a year of coordinating. The festival will move to April to avoid overlapping with the Orinda Film Festival, which will be in October.

Organizers already are working on the Danville International Children's Film Festival, which is coming in May.

Even with higher audience turnout and fundraisers, the association still needs one major thing: corporate sponsorships. The festival has a few sponsors now but needs a lot more.

"It takes so much money to put this film festival on, and I think a lot of people don't realize that," Neeley said.

This week's Comedy Fest for Films will feature raffles and a silent auction. Items for auction include a guitar signed by the Rolling Stones, a football signed by John Madden and a Rat Pack commemorative.

The comedy fest will begin at 6 tonight at Tommy T's Comedy and Steakhouse, 5104 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton. Tickets are \$20, plus a two-item minimum. For more information, call (925) 227-1800.

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