

Burbank Treated to Another 'Jingle Tales & Tunes' Show



ON THE TOWN
David Laurell

No matter where one was born, raised or currently lives, this time of year conjures up so many different memories. From those with the abundant riches of family, friends and wealth, to others who are challenged by loneliness and daily financial struggles, this season is one in which our emotions seem to be accompanied by a hypersensitivity that greatly subsides during the spring, summer and fall.

Those memories, and the emotions they engender, run the gamut from beautiful, heartwarming and funny, to confusing, sad and tragic.

For every person who has enjoyed a holiday season that was right out of a Thomas Kinkade painting, they have, most likely, also experienced one that included the confusing chaos of a creation by Pablo Picasso or Salvador Dali.

Every one of those memories, whether they be merry or melancholy, become a part of who we are. When shared, those memories become tales that have the ability to touch others, giving them a laugh, a tear, a different way of looking at a situation or issue, a change in attitude, or the simple realization that every life is a blend of the good and times as well as the bad.

This past week, as she has done for the past three holiday seasons, Suzanne Weerts' production company, JAM Creative, has given Burbankers the opportunity to hear the tales of eight local storytellers that have stemmed from their own hilarious, heartwarming and heart-breaking memories.

As has become the tradition, the Colony Theatre was the venue for this year's presentation of "Jingle Tales & Tunes," which, along with providing an entertaining evening, also serves as a fundraiser for the Family Service Agency of Burbank (FSA).

Followed by a backstage, pre-show meeting between the storytellers and Laurie Bleick, who serves as the CEO of FSA, the evening officially began with



Photos by David Laurell / Burbank Leader

For the third time, Suzanne Weerts presented an evening of holiday storytellers to benefit Burbank's Family Service Agency (FSA).

a welcome to the audience by Weerts and a musical set by singer-songwriter Abby Posner, winner of the 2023 USA Songwriting Competition.

Posner was accompanied by Paula Fong, who the digital magazine "Americana Highways" has lauded for being "deeply rooted in a folksy tradition [glossed] up with gentle brush strokes of country zeal and bluegrass sweeps spiced with her effective vocal style."

The evening's featured storytellers then took their turns, each garnering a different emotional response from the full house.

Making her third "Jingle Tales" appearance, author and podcaster Pilar Alessandra told of a horror that took place in a Hallmark town. She was joined by members in her storytelling sisterhood, comedienne and actress Pattie Fitzgerald, voice actress Lauri Fraser, author Cara Lopez and actress, writer, producer and director Johanna Stein, who reminisced on Christmas and Hanukkah memories of

their past.

The ladies' male counterparts, actor Pablo Marz, writer, poet and actor Boyce Miller and playwright Brent Beerman, also shared their stories, respectfully titled "Great Expectations," "First Christmas," and "You Better Be Good."

Last week's event, capped off with a reception in which audience members could meet the storytellers, was made possible by sponsors including Schafer Electric, Ume Federal Credit Union, Jack O'Neill, Volpei Gussow Barnes Real Estate, Community Chevrolet, Christopher Rizzotti Real Estate, Susy Shearer Photography, Towers in the Window and Nothing Bundt Cakes, Tina's Vodka, and Color Images Copy and Print.

Since 2016, Weerts' production company has produced 17 shows that have raised nearly \$50,000 for local nonprofits.

"It fills my heart to see the amazing musicians and gifted storytellers who awe me with their words, their heart, and their humor," said Weerts. "They have taken the

stage to support the critically important work done by organizations like FSA, and our audiences come back year after year because they know they will be entertained while making a difference."

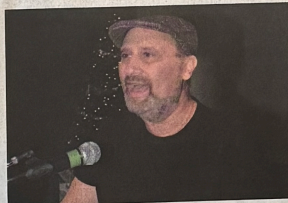
Family Service Agency of Burbank is dedicated to providing quality mental health care for all and eliminating domestic violence, suicide, and all other forms of interpersonal violence, as well as preventing homelessness and serving veterans and their families.

The nonprofit organization provides counseling and preventive services on 18 Burbank school campuses, and in three residential treatment facilities. They also provide crisis intervention, clinical counseling, transitional housing, and violence prevention services and education on conflict resolution, domestic violence, and peaceful parenting.

For more information on their services or support opportunities, visit familyserviceagencyofburbank.org.



Wondering what may be under the tree for her, Pilar Alessandra has appeared in all three productions of "Jingle Tales and Tunes."



Brent Beerman made his second appearance in a JAM Creative Production's show offering his holiday tale.



Boyce Miller provided a pause for poignant memories at last week's event.



Tale-teller Pattie Fitzgerald gave last week's audience a gift of humorously heartwarming family memories.



Abby Posner and Paula Fong musically warmed-up the audience for an evening of holiday tales.



Lauri Fraser entertained the assemblage with her tale titled "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Chanukah."



Laurie Bleick, the CEO of FSA, met backstage with the tale-telling cast members including Cara Lopez Lee and Johanna Stein prior to last week's show.