

# Bay Area comics bring free laughs to the Roundup Saloon

By Sharon K. Sobotta



Entertainer Ryan Rodriguez



Jonny Rios

Photos provided

Ryan Rodriguez has been an entertainer of sorts. But it wasn't until he sustained an injury that took him out of his gig as a professional wrestler that he found his way to the comedy scene.

"(In 2016) my friend signed me up out of the blue at an open mic event and I ended up cutting a promo by roasting the audience for three minutes straight," Rodriguez said. "They told me to go back and write some material and keep coming back. I did and I was able to build my own set to what it is now."

Rodriguez, along with Guile Mosher and Jonny Rios wove their love for comedy into Bay Area Comics and are on a mission to get people across the Bay – including Lamorindans – laughing. To do this, they're hosting a free

comedy show the last Tuesday of every month at the Roundup Saloon in downtown Lafayette. The monthly tradition kicked off in January and the next free live open mic event is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 27 at 8 p.m.

The 26-year-old Rios performed a set during the Roundup's first comedy night. While on stage, he pulled the audience in with self-deprecating relatable jokes about everything from his immigrant childhood to his relationships.

"I don't go for the lowest hanging fruit. Even if the audience doesn't have my same exact story, they can relate to having a mother or another aspect of the jokes I tell, and laugh."

"Comedy works. I don't ever remember being sad while I was

laughing," Rios says.

"Comedy was my favorite pastime. And my roommate told me to try out an open mic and I did," Rios recalls. "When I was on stage getting laughter, and even after, I completely forgot all of my problems. It felt like there was a new connection in my brain. It felt nice to be able to make other people feel better and I felt better in return."

Sami Al-Asfour lives and works in Moraga and was thrilled to come to Lafayette for the Roundup's first comedy show.

"I thought the five comedians were good. After long stressful days at work, it's important to find the time to laugh and not take it seriously," Al-Asfour says. "I'll go to another comedy show and invite my co-workers."

## New Executive Director for Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation



Carol Varney

Photo provided

The Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation (LLLCF) board of trustees is pleased to announce they have selected Carol Varney as the new executive director of the LLLCF.

Varney's extensive background as a strategic and innovative executive

director of non-profit organizations, combined with keen development skills and a deep passion for promoting community-based programming, will help further advance the impact of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center which celebrates its 15th anniversary this

year. Lisa Spiegler, LLLCF board of trustees immediate past president says, "Our board and transition team unanimously agreed that Carol's vast experience, as well as her commitment to the Foundation's mission and impact, make her the ideal leader for LLLCF. We are so excited about the possibilities that lay ahead under Carol's guidance, and we can't wait to start working with her as we embark on this new chapter."

Varney will manage day-to-day operations for the Foundation, the mission of which is to sustain the Lafayette Library and Learning Center as a community place and a regional resource that offers enriched experiences for all ages. She will work in partnership with Foundation board and staff, the Library manager, Friends of the LLLCF, and the city of Lafayette to ensure the library continues to evolve to meet the dynamic needs of its patrons. Varney will also oversee fundraising activities, managing fiscal resources efficiently and effectively; lead stakeholder engagement initiatives to deepen the library's ties within the community; and develop an operating plan based on shared mission, vision and values to benefit all who access the library. "It's an honor to hold this position in Lafayette. I look forward to meeting the community and learning how LLLCF can continue to grow its role in supporting enriching experiences for all," she said. - provided by LLLCF

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