

Virtual Open Mic Freedom of Expression Support Group

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

Welcome to Independence Perspective, a public affairs presentation of Western New York Independent Living (WNYIL). Our guest today is Lisa Maria Cruz, Mental Health Peer Connection (MHPC) outreach specialist, and I'm your host Ernie Churchwell. Welcome to the program, Lisa Maria.

00:00:19 Speaker 2

Thank you so much for having me.

00:00:21 Speaker 1

It's our pleasure. And you're here to talk about the resumption of the Virtual Open Mic, Freedom of Expression Support Group.

00:00:38

First of all, I imagine that title probably has a number of listeners perplexed. What can you tell us about who this support group is intended to assist?

00:00:52 Speaker 2

Well, really the support group is for anyone in the community who may be feeling isolated or alone. So, I know that many times isolation can lead to depression and so this group really hopes to like prevent that.

00:01:07

So if someone is looking to connect with new people in a safe and happy space.

00:01:15

They're welcome to come to the Virtual Open Mic Freedom of Expression.

00:01:19

And so it's open to the general public. You just have to be 18 or up.

00:01:25

And you can be an artist, a former artist. Or maybe you want to be an artist, like everyone's welcome. And if you have a talent that you would like to share, we'd be happy to welcome

you. People have done like spoken words, singing, playing musical instruments. We even had a hula hooper at one time. So, I really like any genre of art.

00:01:46

And any type of artist is welcome to come.

00:01:50 Speaker 1

Do participants have to register in advance and to in order to belong to it?

00:01:56 Speaker 2

You don't have to register, but you do have to reach out to me. I'm the facilitator and the group is on Zoom. So, in order to participate in the group, you do need to be sent a Zoom link.

00:02:08

And I would be the person to do that. My email is lisamariacruz@wnyil.org

00:02:27 Speaker 1

Alright, in case people couldn't get that quite fast enough, is there a phone number they can reach you at?

00:02:33 Speaker 2

Oh, definitely. It's 716-239-5609.

00:02:43 Speaker 1

All right, as an alternative, is there an in office extension they could also use?

00:02:49 Speaker 2

Definitely so the main number is my number, it's 716-836-0822 and then I am at ext. 509.

00:03:01 Speaker 1

Terrific. It sounds like this is quite an opportunity for people to let their creativity roll. What are some of the more unusual types of open mic? Can contributions that you've seen or heard?

00:03:20 Speaker 2

Well, we've had people do Weird Al Yankovic, which is awesome.

00:03:29 Speaker 1

Excellent taste.

00:03:45 Speaker 2

Yeah, so that was fun. And then, like I said earlier, we did have someone that hula hooped and we had someone like act before. So really like any type of artistic talent is welcome.

00:03:53 Speaker 1

So, if someone wants to do a soliloquy from Shakespeare or whatever, that would be acceptable?

Speaker 2

That would definitely be acceptable.

00:03:55 Speaker 1

That sounds exciting and you encourage people to perform their own creations as well, correct?

00:04:05 Speaker 2

Yeah, you can perform your own creations. Or maybe you appreciate a certain poet or writer you could share their work. They could be. I mean, I participate in the group and I always share my own work. But like, I know people sometimes like reading other artists. So that's welcome too.

00:04:24 Speaker 1

Would you believe we're already running short on time?

00:04:27

In case people didn't have a pencil handy, could you repeat your phone number please?

00:04:32 Speaker 2

Sure, it's 716-239-5609.

00:04:37 Speaker 1

Thanks so much for being with us, Lisa Maria.

00:04:40 Speaker 2

Thank you for having me.

00:04:41 Speaker 1

You've been listening to Independent Perspective, a public affairs presentation of WNYIL. Our guest today was Lisa Maria Cruz, MHPC outreach specialist in charge of the Virtual Open Mic freedom of Expression support group, and I've been your host, Ernie Churchwell.