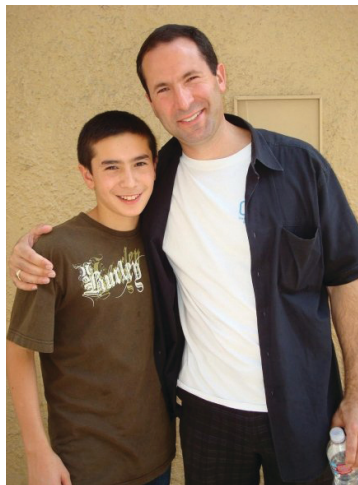


A funny family pauses to discuss the comedy cause

It's a family affair when it comes to doing standup comedy in the Applebaum household. Jeff and his son, Josh, 14, hit the stage at "Paws for Laughter" on Jan. 15 at Fort Mason Center's Southside Theater to raise money for San Francisco's Rocket Dog Rescue.

Jeff Applebaum is a New York native who has finally figured out how to speak English after living in California for 19 years, he says. His 100 percent clean comedy act revolves around his unique life experiences, including being the only white kid on his Little League team in Queens, having a Chinese wife who orders from takeout menus in fluent Mandarin, and raising Josh, a teenage son who calls himself "Jewnese," because he says it sounds better than "Chine-ish."

Jeff recently made his national TV debut on CBS as a comedian on the *Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson* and was cast to play classic comic Joey Bishop in the long-running musical tribute *The Rat Pack is Back* in San Francisco, Chicago and Las Vegas. He is also credited and appears in the blockbuster film *The Pursuit of*



Josh (left) and Jeff Applebaum share a passion for standup comedy and working clean

Happyness starring Will Smith.

Josh Applebaum has been doing standup for six years now and has worked with names like Robin Williams, Johnny Steele, and his famous father, to name a few.

NORTHSIDE SAN FRANCISCO: Is there a comedy gene? Did you each get your unique sense of humor from your parents?

JEFF: My parents, Robert and Roz, are both very funny people. My mother will claim that all of the humor comes from her, and that she is responsible for half of my jokes, which is true.

JOSH: I'm from a funny, happy family, and we like to laugh. My dad is pretty funny, I guess, and he really encourages my standup comedy. I share my jokes with him, and he helps me with them, so I would definitely credit him for my sense of humor.

NSF: What motivates you to do this crazy standup thing?

JEFF: For me, it's all about public validation. There's nothing like a bunch of people at a club to see comedy because they're not connected — they're coming from all their very different worlds — some drunk, some sleeping, others hunched over. And within minutes (or less if you're good), a headliner can hopefully find common ground and pull the crowd together to focus and enjoy and laugh at something. They're saying, "Hey, you made me laugh, and you made me

feel good. Thanks!" The appreciation is the key, and it's the reason why I do it.

JOSH: I enjoy talking to people and telling stories, so that's why I'm doing it. It's a great way for me to express myself, and I enjoy meeting people.

NSF: If Josh ever swore on stage, would you ground him?

JEFF: I don't swear on stage, and up until recently Josh never heard me swear at all, but I do slip once in a while. I've had a clean act since day one, and I know it's gotten me more work because of it. I don't curse much, so Josh doesn't get that type of input. Of course, now he probably gets it from some of his classmates, so what can you do? Profanity is sometimes the best way to communicate something, but I work clean, and Josh has chosen to do the same.

NSF: What does a teenager today find funny, and how would you describe your act?

JOSH: I don't do jokes for teenagers because they can't get into the clubs

where I perform. So I write jokes for adults, not for people my age.

NSF: This is a benefit for Rocket Dog Rescue. Do you own a dog or can you tell us a dog story?

JEFF: When I was a kid, we had a cat, and then we adopted a stray dog. But the cat was so territorial that it attacked the dog on a regular basis, so we had to find a new home for the dog. But we liked that dog.

JOSH: I really like dogs, and they like me for some reason. We're so busy that we can't have a dog right now, but hopefully in the future I want to have one.

NSF: Jeff, you're co-headlining with the legendary Steven Pearl. Can you two possibly riff together at "Paws for Laughter"? You could call it "Dueling Hebrews!"

JEFF: Two New York Jews from the same area — that could be dangerous. I don't think I can keep up with Pearl. He's a machine and an animal on stage, which is fitting for a dog rescue fundraiser. Is there a rescue organization for old comics? There should be!

— E. Attanasio

BOUCHER, CONT'D FROM PG. 13

one's given up on," Boucher says with conviction. "They need someone to not just walk past their kennel and leave them to die; they need someone to stop and give them a chance."

Boucher and her band of volunteers give those throwaway dogs that chance, and the best part of their job is watching them thrive and blossom in forever homes. Cooper, a 100-pound-plus pit bull mix that I fostered for Rocket Dog nearly two years ago, is living proof: he failed his temperament test, was said to be human and dog aggressive, and "unsuitable for adoption or any rescue." Still, Boucher refused to give up on Cooper — I fostered him for a month and then a wonderful family in Half Moon Bay saw him on the Rocket Dog Rescue website. After one meeting, Cooper moved into his spacious new digs near Mavericks

beach. I recently got an e-mail from his mom, Kris Murphy. "Cooper is doing amazing," she wrote. "I know it sounds so trite, but he really blows my mind ... he has been cornered in the ocean by snappy Pomeranians — all he does is look to me for direction. I overhear the regulars tell their friends, 'Oh, don't worry about him — he just wants to play ball!' ... Cooper is my ray of happiness everyday."

Support Rocket Dog Rescue at "Paws for Laughter," a standup comedy fundraiser co-sponsored by Northside San Francisco and Fort Mason Center, starring co-headliners Jeff Applebaum and Steven Pearl and featuring Josh Applebaum, Coree Spencer, Max Curry, Sam Obeid, and special guests. Southside Theater, Building D, Fort Mason Center, Saturday, Jan. 15, 2011, 8–11 p.m.; tickets \$30 at 415-994-5335 or www.brownpapertickets.com. All proceeds benefit Rocket Dog Rescue.

Pearls of comedy wisdom

Comedian Steven Pearl's high-energy standup act has been described as "out of control," "beyond bizarre," "over the top," "crazy," and "frenetic." But no one has ever accused Pearl of not being completely hilarious. If you've ever seen him perform, the experience is still probably fresh in your mind, because Pearl's unique style of comedy sticks with you for a long time — like a fender bender or a surprise birthday party. If comedy is the cure for what's ailing you, Pearl is a toxic mixture of Freud, Dr. Seuss and Dr. Demento — all rolled into one.

After hitting the stage in comedy clubs in his native New York for less than a year, Pearl journeyed to San Francisco in 1979. He quickly blew up in the comedy scene and was often on stage cracking up club audiences and performing 8–10 times per week. In 1987, Pearl moved to L.A. and was soon working extensively as an opening act for Sam Kinison. During that period, he also worked with Bill Hicks, Jim Carrey, Robin Williams, and Rodney Dangerfield. Several years ago, he fled the Hollywood scene and has reemerged as one of the funniest comics in the Bay Area. It definitely debunks the old adages about not going back to the past.

Pearl is happy to be donating his time to Rocket Dog Rescue because he believes in the cause and loves dogs. "I am a major, major dog guy, believe me!" he says. "I want to get a dog bad, but right now we can't do it



S.F. comedy legend Steven Pearl (shown here with his friend's dog Mushroom) co-headlines "Paws for Laughter" on Jan. 15

here where we live, but the first chance we can, we're going to get a bigger place and a dog."

Pearl's dog history contains beagles and the dog of his life, a blonde retriever. "I had a blonde Labrador retriever named Tracy, and she was my best friend from 1969 through 1983, and I still miss her every single day. ... She was unique; the sweetest, smartest animal I've ever known. As a kid, first we had a beagle named Daisy, when I was probably around 5 years old. Then later we got Cindy, another beagle, and then Tracy. I love all animals, but I have a real affection for dogs."

Many comics leave the Bay Area for bigger things down south, but while Pearl was there the industry changed, and not for the better, he said. "I worked with Sam Kinison in the Bay Area in the mid-'80s, and he liked me, so he got me into the Comedy Store in L.A., and it was great. So in '87, I moved down there, and I started

hanging out with Sam and his wild gang. I partied way too much; I didn't sleep in 1987, and I didn't blink in '88. At first it was a blast, then it was just fun, and then eventually it turned into a nightmare. They changed the rules on us midgame, because talent scouts and network people don't go out to comedy shows like they used to. Everything is all about reality TV right now, and standup isn't the priority it used to be down there."

And then love brought Pearl back to his second home, San Francisco. "Coincidentally, I got back into contact with an old girlfriend who lives in the Bay Area. I hadn't seen her in 22 years and we started talking again, and I came up here. We reconnected, and I'm with her right now, and everything's great. It was a good time to get out of L.A., and I couldn't be happier. Life is very good right now."

Pearl has always loved San Francisco and remembers his early years here as a fledgling comic in the early '80s. "I came out from New York and I didn't know anyone," he said. "I wanted to do standup and the scene was very friendly. I was an oddball, and I ran into a bunch of oddballs just like me, Robin Williams included. I started making a name for myself; the audiences were amazing, and I could make some dough. So, it was a great place to be, and I always felt accepted here. And now I'm back. I really feel like I'm coming home and I love it!"

— E. Attanasio

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