

ABMDR's 'Laughter for Life' Celebrates Hope and Spirit of Giving

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Contributor

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Some of the comedians featured at Laughter for Life with members of the ABMDR Comedy Night Committee and the organization's Board

Annual comedy night marks 15th anniversary

LOS ANGELES—More than 350 supporters attended the highly anticipated 5th annual Laughter for Life, held on November 12 at the world-famous Comedy Store in West Hollywood. The sold-out event, which featured performances by an outstanding lineup of comics, benefited the life-saving mission of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Following a food-and-cocktail hour, the show opened with remarks delivered by Lara Yeretsian, chairwoman of the ABMDR Comedy Night Committee. As she welcomed the guests, Yeretsian spoke about the work of ABMDR and the organization's founding in 1999. That year, she explained, the parents of a four-year-old girl in Ohio, Alique Topalian, were desperately seeking a matched bone-marrow donor to help save her life through a transplant. Alique became the inspiration for the launch of ABMDR, which was established by Dr. Frieda Jordan and Dr. Sevak Avagyan to bring the hope of life-saving bone marrow stem cell transplantation to thousands afflicted by life-threatening blood-related illnesses.



ABMDR Board members and supporters

Next, Yeretsian invited acclaimed comedian and fellow Comedy Night Committee member Sam Tripoli to the stage. Yeretsian and Tripoli co-founded Laughter for Life in 2012, for the purpose of supporting the ABMDR cause through extraordinary comedy events. As Tripoli came on stage, Yeretsian surprised him by announcing that his cousin, Alique Topalian, had flown from Cleveland to attend the show and was actually among the audience — as were her parents. What followed was an emotional reunion of Tripoli and Topalian, as she appeared on stage to the jubilation of the audience.

Today, Alique Topalian is a PhD candidate as well as a teacher at University of Cincinnati.

Laughter for Life's main program began with Sam Tripoli introducing the night's performers. They included famed comedians Maz Jobrani, Mary Basmadjian, Russell Peters, Michael Gregorian, Tamer Kattan, and Kira Soltanovich. Also performing was Sam Tripoli himself, as he has done every year since the inception of Laughter for Life.

The subject matter tackled by the standup comics covered quite a range, from relationships and gender politics to the brave new world of social media, smart-phone etiquette, and the often maddening cultural phenomena they have spawned. The comedians also told incisive stories and delivered exuberant punch lines on topics including the many peculiarities of the Armenian state of mind, as well as more universal subjects such as racial profiling, superpower politics, and the distinct oddities of living and working in Los Angeles. As importantly, several of the comedians underscored the importance of facing life-altering situations with humor and laughter, courage, and hope.



Members of the ABMDR Comedy Night Committee

“These marvelous comedians totally wowed the audience with their smart, high-octane monologues and hilarious jokes,” said Dr. Frieda Jordan, president of ABMDR. “On that beautiful night, comedians and guests alike were staring cancer in the face with their hearty laughter, while celebrating hope and the resilience of the human spirit. Maz Jobrani, for instance, who has lost his sister to cancer, approached his personal tragedy as an opportunity to raise awareness of life-threatening illnesses and the importance of grassroots support. It’s why he’s planning on starting a foundation in his sister’s honor.”

Contributing to the success of the 15th-anniversary Laughter for Life was the support of many sponsors. They included Dilanchian Chiropractic Corporation, Paulette Malekian of Dilbeck Real Estate, Daglian Law Group, Hungry Nomad Food Truck, Yeretsian Law, the Comedy Store, Sam Tripoli, Sasoun Bakery, California Gourmet Nuts, Law Offices of Meline Mkrtychian, and Giantto Fine Jewelry. During the show, Sam Tripoli auctioned two watches donated by Giantto Fine Jewelry, in further support of the ABMDR mission.

About the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry: Established in 1999, ABMDR, a nonprofit organization, helps Armenians and non-Armenians worldwide survive life-threatening blood-related illnesses by recruiting and matching donors to those requiring bone marrow stem cell transplants. To date, the registry has recruited over 29,000 donors in 30 countries across four continents, identified over 4,190 patients, and facilitated 30 bone marrow transplants. For more information, call (323) 663-3609 or visit abmdr.am.