



# Humor with a serious twist

BMR staff impressed by speaker

By MICHAEL HOLTZMAN  
Staff Writer

BLACKSTONE — Back in March, when Frederick W. Hartnett, the next superintendent at Blackstone-Millville Regional, and Everett B. Campbell, who had been named to replace



Call Photo/Michael Holtzman

# Funny bone broken? Go ahead, laugh

Babies laugh 45 times a day, the experts say; adults manage only 15. Why?

Life piles up, that's why. Mortgages, ingrown toenails, spattering bacon grease — they can all choke the laughter right out of us.

Yvonne Conti, 50, is a former Chattanooga carpenter who has become a stand-up



# Author hopes book helps kids cope with Sept. 11

Fayetteville native wants to benefit Children's Aid Society in New York City.

By Laura T. Ryan  
Staff writer

Yvonne Conti reacted to the World Trade Center attacks as most of us did. She sat immobile in front of her TV set for days.

Despite her job as a motivational speaker, she seems

Conte, nationally known humor presenter thinks you do. In fact, she says she needs to spend a little more time on a lot less time worrying and stress-  
problems.  
"Conte said yesterday at a special presentation at Evangelical Hospital. "It can help get us

And Conte is an adult capable of reason, logic and deliberation. She couldn't even imagine how confused and rudderless young children must have felt.

So she wrote and published a book to help them understand that "we can still have birthday parties, we can still laugh with our friends, we can still move on with our life," says Conte, a Syracuse native who grew up in Fayetteville and lives in Rochester now.

a boy named Frankie has to the strange behavior he sees in the adults around him.

Frankie wonders why: his sister didn't go to her ballet lesson; his mommy cried all day and never gave him his vitamin; his daddy hugged him longer and harder than ever before.

"That day," Conte says, "I would imagine a lot of kids didn't get their vitamins, didn't get a good dinner."

Conte asked her artist friend, Anna Cerullo, to draw the illustrations. She also told her typewriter and editor (Phoenix



Editing, respectively) that she planned to do

# 'Serious Laughter' appeals to businesses

ELIZABETH DORAN  
SMALL BUSINESS NOTEBOOK

Fayetteville Yvonne Conti's company is now to incorporate humor into the workplace. She has written "Serious Laughter," a book on the medical benefits of numerous exercises to add laughter to your home. She is signing copies at James & Noble, E., DeWitt, on

# Author advocates laughter

Fun in workplace eases tensions, promotes unity and adds spirit, she says.

By Anita Bruzesse  
Gannett News Service

With layoffs, pay freezes and downsizings, the American workplace is about as fun as an ingrown toenail. Add the threat of war, an economy that seems to have stalled and crooked CEOs, and you have a recipe for morale going right down the toilet.

But Yvonne Conti, author and speaker on improving the spirit of work through laughter, says it's time we all took fun seriously. It's time we began each day with a laugh in order to balance out those times that aren't so amusing. She is finding out your e-mail

tacks, she said people were "needy" to have something to laugh or smile about, and "they really needed someone to say it was OK to be happy."

"I'm not just talking about putting on a clown nose and walking around the office to get people to laugh," says Conti, director of Crack-A-Smile Seminars (www.crack-a-smile.com). "The message is that it's the spirit of the place that's important. Be kind. Be understanding. Be compassionate. Be truly interested in your client. Care about that person's life."

It's that atmosphere of kindness, she says, that makes it so much easier to do everything in life, including work. "We were so much off doing

others along with you. Some ideas:

Two truths and a lie. Get a group together for lunch. Each person must tell two things that are true about him- or herself, and one lie. The group must figure out which is the untruth. This helps you get to know one another better.

Post funny cartoons. Not just the one that relates to the workplace, but anything fun and silly about life.

Start a lunch group. Each person cooks for the other's once a week. It's a way to share the duty while enjoying new foods.

Put rubber fish in the water cooler.  
Post a difficult crossword puzzle and let everyone contribute an answer. If you get them all right by the end of the week, order a pizza.



Yvonne Conti believes that it is a true kindness if you can get others to have a good time along

# Seminar focuses on laughter in the workplace

By Charley Hannagan  
Staff writer

In her sharp, red and black suit, Yvonne Conti looked just like every other professional Tuesday at an Oncenter luncheon.

Then she donned a red clown nose, and the 130 people in the room cracked up.

The Fayetteville native wore the nose, a funny mask and burst out in belly laughs as she kidded her way through a pep talk for members of the Central New York Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management.

Conte said her goal is to help people get back the joy and laughter they've lost.

her own life — rheumatoid arthritis, a divorce and the loss of a job — into a career of reminding people to be joyful about life. She lives in Rochester and is the founder and director of fun of Crack-A-Smile seminars.

"Life is a choice. We can choose to find the joy in any situation."

Laughter's good for you, she said. Twenty seconds of belly laughter equals three minutes of strenuous rowing, Conte said.

Turning yourself over to stress and worry

heart disease, high blood pressure, headaches, nervous breakdowns, hair loss, fear and a weakened immune system.

Laughter, on the other hand, lowers blood pressure and heart rate, elevates the mood, makes a

person more productive, promotes teamwork, builds confidence, promotes good health and brings people together.

Smile, no matter how small

— Yvonne Conti

# Expert says laughter is good for you, and she has the stats to back that up

A 20-second belly laugh gives you as much exercise as three minutes of strenuous rowing, says Yvonne Conti, an expert in the field of laughter.

What's more, "When we laugh out loud, 16 major organs are positively affected in our body. It puts us in a good mood," Conte told a crowd at Evangelical Community Hospital in Lewisburg.

Conte, 35, we later learned, is a member of the Little Kids Laughing Academy in Fayetteville.

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# Speaker touts power of humor

By G. JEFFREY AARON  
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Yvonne Conti, a former saleswoman and stand-up comic turned motivational speaker, is full of stories.

Some are about her life. Some are about the lives of those around her. All are designed to do one thing — make



humor workshop to more than 200 corporations around the country.

Conte once sold telephone systems in central New York, but when her employer moved to Florida, she decided to remain in the Rochester area. Following her son's suggestion, she gave stand-up comedy a try. Six months later, she took her act on the road.

Conte's career changed directions again when she was asked to address