



## Chris Young: He's driven by comic aspirations

By Susan Parcheta

"If you can't get a little ahead, at least get a little behind."

It's the signature line for Gregory resident Christopher Young...a comic at heart...driven to the entertainment spotlight, and whose comedic career is off and running.

Young has entertained at Michigan clubs and casinos in recent months, including Leo's Comedy Korner in Windsor and the Washington Street Comedy Club in Bay City, where he opened for Howell's own Haywood Banks.

"It was an honor to work with Heywood Banks in Bay City," Young says. "He has always been one of my comedy idols."

"The clubs have been very fun and I really have enjoyed the Moose and the Elks and Eagles lodge shows. Those people are so much fun."

He heads often to Island Resort and Casino in Escanaba in the Upper Peninsula; and he's performed at Jonesville Elks Lodge in Jonesville.

A big gig was the Battle Creek Relay for Life show, held in April at Gary Fields Comedy Club. Chris was a special guest comedian for this comedy benefit.

Local fans enjoyed Chris recently at the Holly Hotel Comedy Club in Holly. He'll return in the fall; the schedule is at [www.hollyhotel.com](http://www.hollyhotel.com).

He also performs with the Future Stars of Comedy Tour, a group of 31 comedians from around the Great Lakes. The group offers five comedians for each venue for an hour-and-a-half show. [www.futurestarsofcomedytour.com](http://www.futurestarsofcomedytour.com)

**While Chris has comic aspirations**, he does have another life...*day-to-day life*... from which he draws much of his material.

He works full time as a distributor of industrial repair parts for Burnes Distribution of Cleveland. Young appreciates the flexibility the job affords him, allowing him to work in his comedy schedule.

He enjoys being involved in the machine repair process. "I like to see how things are made," he says, adding a comedic twist, "I'm one of those kids who liked to get his hands dirty." Plus, he says, "Growing up on the farm, I got to see all kinds of things being made every day."

A 1991 graduate of Fowlerville High School, Young says his wife, Angela (a cost accountant), tells people that life is always an adventure with Chris around.

The couple attends the United Methodist Church in Plainfield, where this summer Chris inspired youngsters attending Vacation Bible School with his dramatic talents.

Church members are looking forward to the time when Young might put on a comedy show there for the public. Not so fast, though. Writing and perfecting a comedy routine, he explains, demands more time than most people realize. "It takes a long time to write a 30-minute show... a year or more."

And while he acknowledges being a "clean comic," ("I don't swear in routines, it's just not me."), writing a routine for a church crowd, is challenging. But eventually, he hopes to do the church gig.

Plainfield is the hometown church of his mom, Becky (Smith) Young, retired Howell teacher. Becky is the daughter of the late Bernyce and George Smith, and those who know the family well, know exactly where Chris derived his penchant for comedy.

It does run in the family. As Chris likes to put it, "The fruits don't fall far from the tree." One year, while his mom was teaching summer classes, Chris spent time with his Grandma at the farm. This grandma was one who played with the grandkids in zany, imaginary, creative ways.

A favorite play-acting time for the two of them was sitting outside in an old junk car, imagining they were on a grand road adventure. "We'd pick long weeds or cattails and pretend we were smoking," he recalls, smiling at the memory. They'd joke, he says, about getting in the old car and 'smoking weed' together.

Young's mom is well known in local circles for her comedic talent, as well. Chris sees it as a gift. "God gives everyone some different gifts," he reflects about their mutual gift of humor.

Regarding his mom, Young jokes that you never needed a dinner bell at her house. "I always knew when to come to dinner when the smoke alarm went off."

Laughing, he points out that he seems to attract "stuff happening"...so his comedy dialog *stuff* comes out of those events that *happen* to him everyday. "If it's going to happen to someone," insists Young, "it'll happen to me."

"I don't think I have 'bad luck,' but sometimes things happen to me." And that, he will tell you, is the *stuff* of which comedy is created.

He recounts an example of stuff happening with this story about attending a ball game: "A cup of pop was thrown outside, up over the stadium and hit me on the way in, so I was covered with pop all day long."

He holds his own theories about how comedy should be done, as well. Humor is tough, says Young. "It can't just be that you're telling a story. If they haven't experienced it, it's not funny. So you have to relate it as if they experienced it."

**"Everybody has stuff in their life**, every day. You've got two choices. Be mad, or laugh. And I usually laugh."

You either laugh about things that happen, Young points out, or you don't fit into his family.

Comedians like Jay Leno often are remembered as being "born funny." Young's family background reflects this genetic attribute. The *funny* side of life was celebrated.

Making fun of oneself is still part of the family makeup. "Our family is able to laugh when we get together." And on the flip side, he teases, "We are always together laughing."

Yes, the funny bone. "In my family," Young continues, "if you couldn't laugh at yourself, there was no love lost."

Laughter is healing, he believes, noting, "I think there's not enough laughter in the world." People take things too seriously, he contends. "That's why things are messed up in the world." With the ability to coax people to lighten up, Young plans to use this gift wherever he can...to make a difference.

"In comedy, always, even at a young age, I've enjoyed making people laugh." He declares that he can't sing or dance, nor is he musically inclined. "So comedy," he says, "was my only other outlet."

Sure there were plays in elementary and high school, and he usually landed one of the top speaking parts.

Of course, he laughs about the time he played Santa Claus. "My pants fell down. I bent down and picked them up and kept going."

The stage was set, as his mom puts it, for this aspiring comic back as a youngster. She looks back fondly on those same memories. "From the time Chris was little," she says, "he loved to laugh and make other people laugh. He's able to look at life's situations and see the humor in all of it."

He's always loved the stage, she acknowledges, noting that he usually had the lead role in elementary plays. "Sometimes they'd end up pretty comical, like the time he was playing Santa Claus in the Christmas play. He stood up to say his part and the bottom of the Santa Claus outfit fell to the floor."

"Life at his grandparents house usually meant lots of laughter and jokes with cousins, aunts and uncles," she says. "I remember the time Chris would say something and his aunt would write it down, saying that someday he could use it for a comedy act. It was great fun to be there. Many of his own experiences are comedic material for him."

**Now, for the adult crowd,** admits the now adult comic Chris Young, "It's hard to get a room ready to laugh, unless it's a comedy club, and then that's what they're there for. "Sometimes, as soon as you walk in the door, you can tell people are ready to laugh."

"That's when it's kind of magic."

"Laughter," quips Young, "is kind of a comic's drug."

Usually there's a base from which you work, and then add new things, he explains. "It can never be canned because of the audience interaction. I have stuff I write, but there's no way to tell the audience reaction until you try it."

Young doesn't use notes. "Sometimes, I'll have a list in my pocket."

Outfits, he notes, depend on the venue. If it's a biker's bar, "I'll wear a Harley shirt."

Comedy contests are Young's least favorite venue. "I'm still very much at an early stage in comedy," he says.

Often it's a labor of love, with the only payment being gas to and from the event. So he's been enjoying the upswing in comedy club and casino performances.

Many people wonder how a comedian manages to remain comedic. The natural question would be: "Is it hard to be funny when you don't feel funny?"

The answer for Young: "You just get up and do it. The longer you do it, the more you can do it."

"You're a comic, so tell me a joke!" He loves to get this one. And the first thing to remember, he says, is "that most comedy is not just a joke."

**Young credits teacher Bob Sexton,** who taught English classes at Fowlerville High School, for creating the environment for an aspiring stand-up comic to blossom.

"This is when I was first starting to realize I liked to do stand-up comedy," he says. During his experiences of debate, forensics, and impromptu speaking, Young adds, "I discovered my ability to make people laugh."

He became adept at giving the five-minute speech. "Most of the time," he says, "now that I think about it, I was doing rudimentary stand-up comedy."

He began to realize that, for him, it wasn't so much about winning the competition. "It was about making the room laugh."

Laughter, for Young, is a big subject, and he's definite in expressing his view. "I don't think there's enough of it in our schools." Nor is there enough creative thought, or just learning the art of communication, he poses, getting into his soapbox mode.

"One of the biggest skills that people need in life is the ability to communicate with people." Too often, he believes, public speaking courses are overlooked.

Young's excited about the new state-of-the-art theatre at his hometown high school. He imagines the time when he might do some comedy in that theatre. Then, he feels, he'll have come full circle back to the origin of his inspiration.

Thinking about those days, he chuckles, remembering the time one of the impromptu speech assignments was to use the word *moreover* in a sentence. Doing his best *out-of-the-box* thinking, Young's take on the word went like this:

"I was having a party and I ran out of beer, so I called my friend Andy to send more over."

Young loves this example, because it shows how his teacher took a different stance, perhaps, than some would. "Some teachers could have stiffed you," he says, "but he understood you have to have a sense of humor."

He has always appreciated that sensitivity on the part of his teacher.

Young's cousin, actor Chris Smith, also graduated from Fowlerville and now lives in New York where he works in soap operas. The two check in with each other via email to keep abreast of their mutual entertainment careers.

**Young keeps the acting idea on the back burner** of his mind, though. "I would like to act. "A good actor and a good comic can think on their feet...at improvisation. I've always been able to do that."

"Right now I'm working at my day job." This way, he figures, he can try the comedy life on for size and not be worried about making a living. Says Young, "It's a long, hard road to be at the top."

At this point in his career, he says, "I'm happy where I am." Yet down the yellow-brick-road dream, he pictures opening for a comedian in Las Vegas, and taking some acting classes at Jeff Daniel's Purple Rose Theatre, and eventually participating in some community theatre.

"I'd much rather do a play than a movie," says Young.

His current wish list includes taking an *improv* class at Second City in Novi. "I would help me

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with the stand-up," Young says. "I wanna be a stand-up comic first and foremost, and maybe a little acting on the side."

As a comic, Young has a few favorite admonitions.

One is: that "talent can be anywhere."

Two: "It's easy to take yourself too seriously."

And..."If you really want to know how famous you are, ask your kids or your family what you do for a living."

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To keep up with Chris and his performance schedule, you can check out his MySpace page, where he updates his calendar. You may get there from his website: [www.uglyschtick.com](http://www.uglyschtick.com)  
Chris is also on Facebook. Phone: 206-600-0789.  
Email: [uglyschtick1973@yahoo.com](mailto:uglyschtick1973@yahoo.com)

## Encore Moments with Chris Young

(Here are some extra tidbits about the career aspirations of local comic Chris Young, along with a Q&A about his comedy outlook.)

### As Young's publicity bio suggests:

You take real life experiences and turn them into laughs that maintain a clean but funny appearance.

Chris' luck or lack there of, has led him to look at the world through a different set of glasses.

Having once been called a pessimist by a fellow classmate, "he replied simply that he is not a pessimist but an optimist, as he believes things could not get any worse". He credits his family, and God for giving him his quick wit and ability to laugh. Chris ends each show with a quote that sums up the way he views the world:

"If you can't get a little ahead, at least get a little behind."

## Extra Q & A with comedian Chris Young

**Q. You have appeared at several Michigan casinos. How are the casino experiences?**

A. Those people are so much fun. Casino shows are fun because of the atmosphere, the sounds, the excitement of the casino.

The only thing that is different is that the room is not as intimate as a club, which for a comic, it's great to have a crowd that is close to you. But that is where you just have to work harder, To get them into the show.

Windsor was fun and I will be going back there sometime this summer to work again.

The Canadians are very nice and have some of the same senses of humor that we have here. The only thing is that they do not get the same geographical references that we do here in the States.

**Q. You consider your comedy style to be a clean style. Can you elaborate on that?**

A. I have a clean style to my comedy. I mean I am not a prude. I know all those words but do not choose to use them on stage.

I think as a comic it is harder to work clean, but pays off in the long run. this is not to say I don't have a few adult themed jokes, but they are not explicit or vulgar.

**Q. And how are you doing with your agents?**

A. My agents have been awesome, The Future Stars of Comedy Tour, Entertainment Max (Hollywood agent )and some other local bookers have been keeping me very busy. I am still

working on getting in to some more booking agents and hope to learn more soon.

**Q. You are the MC at the Holly Hotel June 27-28. Can you tell us more about that venue?**

The MC starts the show, does the announcements, does some comedy and introduces the feature, and then comes back up to introduce the headline, then closes out the show doing the thanks for coming, etc.

I emcee at Holly about every 4-6 months. I have been going to Holly for two years. As far as comedy, I am an opener, which sometimes means emceeing or featuring. Headlining takes lots of years to get to.

The Holly hotel is a fun room as it has a great feel and the history there of such names as Tim Allen, and Pat Paulson and all the other greats that learned their craft there.

For more info on that comedy venue go to [www.hollyhotel.com](http://www.hollyhotel.com).

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**Holly Hotel Comedy Club shows are Friday and Saturday at 8:30 and 10:30pm. Ph: 248-634-5208. Young performed in June and will return in the fall to the historic hotel.** He has also appeared at The Comedy Zone in Lansing, Connections Comedy Club, the Comedy Showcase in Ann Arbor, The Comedy Castle in Royal Oak, The Foggy Bottom in Dexter, Joey's Comedy Club in Livonia, The Jackson Comedy Club in Jackson.

**Find Christopher Young** on Facebook, MySpace, [www.uglyschtick.com](http://www.uglyschtick.com)  
Phone: 206-600-0789.  
Email: [uglyschtick1973@yahoo.com](mailto:uglyschtick1973@yahoo.com)

