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Lifeline Productions' "Clowns Like Me" Puts a Spotlight on Mental Health

TAMPA, FL – In his touring one-man show “Clowns Like Me,” Sarasota actor and storyteller Scott Ehrenpreis tells his humorous, yet profound story of living with mental illness to Tampa audiences at the Stageworks Theatre this September 15-24 during National Suicide Prevention Month.

“Clowns Like Me” reveals the enlightening, heartbreaking, and ultimately uplifting true story of Ehrenpreis’ personal journey as he struggles against OCD, bipolar disorder, Asperger’s Syndrome, social anxiety, and depression. Ultimately, Ehrenpreis reveals that being on stage gives him the power, even for just a couple hours, to step into the light and leave the shadows of his mental health struggles behind.

This is the first production by Sarasota based nonprofit Lifeline Productions, which is led by Ehrenpreis’ father, Joel Ehrenpreis, in collaboration with Playwright and Director Jason Cannon. Lifeline Productions formed last year with a mission to produce personal stories of those living with mental illness that create awareness, stimulate conversation, destigmatize mental illness, and foster hope and healing.

One in five U.S. adults experience mental illness symptoms each year, yet less than half of those individuals seek treatment according to the American Psychiatric Association. One of the leading deterrents to seeking treatment is the stigma against those needing help. “We want to use the power of storytelling to take you inside the minds of those who struggle with mental health disorders and offer an enlightening and entertaining experience that leaves you walking away feeling differently about mental illness,” said Ehrenpreis’ father, Joel. With the help of area partnerships and local sponsors, Lifeline hopes to touch many through the two-week run of the show.

With Florida currently ranking 46th in the nation in access to mental health care Joel Ehrenpreis believes that a tour of “Clowns Like Me” couldn’t come at a better time. The show debuted in Sarasota this past May at the Cook Theatre to sold-out audiences who agreed with the project’s impact. “To say we were blown away would be an understatement...Having a son who has emotional issues, this play hit very close to home and made us aware of this situation which has become a nationwide problem. This play should be seen by everyone whose family shares this problem, as well as anyone who is concerned with this growing issue,” says past audience members Larry and Sheree Zaslavsky

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Each performance of "Clowns Like Me" is followed by an audience talkback session with actor Scott Ehrenpreis and a mental health professional such as Dr. Carlos Garcia of Tampa Counseling and Wellness, to continue the conversation after the curtain closes. Many audience members have stated that the entire experience was like "going to therapy," and the show's message about changing the conversation surrounding mental illness is one they will not soon forget. Lifeline Productions is currently raising funds to bring that message to theatres both nationally, and internationally with their current production, as well as a new play in development for May 2024

Tickets are \$35 and on sale at Stageworkstheatre.org. LIFELINE PRODUCTIONS is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit that produces personal stories of those living with mental illness that create awareness, stimulate conversation, destigmatize mental illness, and foster hope and healing. For more information about "Clowns Like Me" and Lifeline Productions visit Lifelineproductionsinc.org

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