

LEFT UNEDITED – No kidding—Arapahoe County line-items humor

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Who says no one reads the legal notices in *The Villager*?

Were it not for these voluminous pages of foreclosures, name changes and court filings, who would have known that the Arapahoe County government recently spent \$1,200 with WHO—no, not the World Health Organization, but something called the World Humor Organization.

According to its website, WHO is a “nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to enriching lives through laughter.” As odd as the World Humor Organization may look on a government balance sheet, imagine if the county had listed WHO’s more distinctive alter ego—Chicken Lips.

Under that evocative name, Bob Wells and friends have entertained audiences for decades as Denver’s premier improv-comedy troupe. Who knew these comics had found a way to parlay their funniness into corporate self-help, on a nonprofit basis no less? Talk about comicGenius.

As it happened, the county hired WHO for the annual May 4 get-together of its Executive Safety Committee and the county’s various emergency-response teams, whose workaday lives are not exactly a barrel of laughs—nor was their annual conference, as you might imagine.

“We spend a good part of the day talking about really serious topics and then we bring in a speaker who can hopefully lighten the mood a little bit,” said Kathy Lutzhanin, a county risk manager. “The focus of the talk was how to deal with stressful environments.”

The county is quick to say that the WHO presentation was not a comedy show per se, though I might say the same about Bill Cosby and Yakov Smirnoff.

That said, even stoic county officials will confess to a few laughs on the taxpayers’ dime. County Attorney Ron Carl says the county received a 50 percent government rate, meaning it effectively received a fiscally conservative 2-for-1 discount on every joke.

That joke was free, by the way—and as I told County Commissioner Nancy Doty, my schedule is wide open next May—and I’m far cheaper than even WHO’s bargain cut rate.

I’m not the only person at *The Villager* worthy of world humor—or at least worthy of being the butt of international drollness. Take photojournalist Stefan Krusze, please. At last month’s annual awards of the Colorado Press Association, Krusze took home the 2015 Photo & Design Sweepstakes for *The Villager*’s sister publication the *Denver Herald Dispatch*.

The comprehensive award for overall excellence came as a surprise, especially for Krusze. After the ceremony, we took photos of each other and patted ourselves on the back for our various awards, but one photo of our photojournalist somehow captured our offbeat imaginations.

Perhaps his top button was too tight. Maybe the excitement was too much. Whatever the case, the photo of Krusze looking like a deer in the headlights soon became the stuff of legend in our editorial department. Before long, Managing Editor Becky Osterwald had created a super-sized image and placed it as main art on a faux-alternative

cover of the *Herald* with the headline “Krusze stunned by excellence award at CPA convention.”

A PDF was sent to Krusze with a notation that this would be the front cover that week. When we didn't hear back from him the next day, we feared he had collapsed from shock (or trauma to the neck from a tightly fastened shirt button).

In any case, he lived to tell the tale—though until he sees the cover's reproduction here with this column, we will have our trusty photographer on watch for any passing headlights.

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The image shows the front page of the Denver Herald newspaper. At the top, there are three small preview boxes with headlines: 'HAWKVILLE HOMEOWNERS ASK FOR TRIPS', 'TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR FEET', and 'GOP LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR SET'. Below these is the newspaper's masthead 'DENVER HERALD' with the date 'SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2011' and the website 'www.denverherald.com'. The main headline reads 'KRUSZE STUNNED BY EXCELLENCE AWARD AT CPA CONVENTION'. To the left of the main photo is a sub-headline 'Caught in Headlights' followed by a short introductory paragraph. The main photograph shows a man in a suit, Stefan Krusze, holding a framed award. To the left of the photo is a vertical list of credits for various sections of the paper. At the bottom of the photo is a caption: 'Stefan Krusze and Sharon from the CPA Convention in Denver, May 14, 2011. Photo by Stefan Krusze for the Denver Herald.' Below the newspaper image is a caption: 'Photojournalist Stefan Krusze finds life on other side of camera shocking.'