

Neighbors **IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

Local comedian Bartlett to open on PAC stage

By **BARBARAANN BARKLEY**

The McKinney Performing Arts Center will premiere comedic acts on its stage at 8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 30.

Up-and-coming stand-up comic Paul Varghese, who is easily recognizable from his work on Comedy Central's *Last Comic Standing*, plus McKinney's own first lady of stand-up — Laura Bartlett — will perform the opening set.

In fact, it was Bartlett's dream to bring talented comics to North Texas. While she honed her comedy skills, she dreamed of a locale that would reach the people who would ordinarily never venture inside a comedy club.

"For over a year, I watched and hoped that the Courthouse would be converted into a theater. Once I heard the good news, I approached David Taylor, director of MPAC, with the idea of taking the Courthouse from 'historical to hysterical.' To my surprise, Mr.



Laura Bartlett

Taylor related that over 80 percent of those surveyed by MPAC for entertainment choices wanted comedy acts," Bartlett said.

Once Bartlett secured comic talent, she approached Billy Domenech, Panera Bread's managing partner, who heartily agreed to be the title sponsor of comedy acts. Then Goodhue's Wood Fired Grill and D'Vine Wine, businesses both located in the historic down-

town square, jumped in to support the inaugural launch of stand-up in McKinney.

"Prior to this venue opening up, people had to travel to the Improv in Addison to see a comic talent like Paul Varghese. They had to put up with a long commute, uncomfortable seating and a smoky environment. Without the MPAC, Paul would not have a place to perform that rivals the best venues in New York, Chicago and L.A.," said Bartlett.

McKinney's Channel 15 will run samples of Varghese's talent, which has been compared to that seen in the comedy sets of Jerry Seinfeld and Ray Ramono.

Like Seinfeld and Ramono, Varghese keeps it clean yet edgy, as you would expect from a comic in his late 20s.

■ For more information or to buy tickets online go to www.mckinneyperformingartscenter.org.