

# THE SUN

WEDNESDAY 10.05.2005

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# ANNE ARUNDEL



Trix Bruce of Seattle, who has been deaf since infancy, performs for both hearing and deaf audiences.

Deaf performer Trix Bruce brings her interactive comedy show to Anne Arundel Community College tomorrow night

## A silence that laughs out loud

BY KAREN NITKIN  
[SPECIAL TO THE SUN]

Trix Bruce has earned a reputation for making her audiences laugh without saying a word.

The Seattle-based performer, who has been profoundly deaf since she was 6 months old, is bringing her improv comedy act to Anne Arundel Community College tomorrow. She'll perform at the Pascal Center for Performing Arts from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The show will be in American Sign Language (ASL), with an interpreter for audience members who don't know the language.

"It's going to be a very funny show," said Nan Pennington, vice president of the college's American Sign Language Club, which is sponsoring the event.

Bruce, who performs for both deaf and hearing audiences, offers many shows and workshops, including classes in English idioms and a performance called *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad ASL World*, a mix of stories, poems and folk

tales, all in ASL.

Tomorrow, she will perform *A Night of Improv with Trix: Whose ASL Is It Anyway?*, an act loosely based on the wildly funny improvisational television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*

"With no practice, no preparation, using different ideas from the audience, and using people from the audience, Trix will captivate you with her impromptu mode of 'ASL-libbing' and a night of hearty laughter," says her Web site.

[Please see DEAF, 6G]

6G WEDNESDAY 10.05.2005

## FROM THE COVER

THE SUN IN ANNE ARUNDEL

# Deaf performer bringing comedy show to AACC

From Page 6G

"We chose this one because she interacts with the audience," Pennington said.

The college's ASL club has about 30 members who get together once a month to practice communicating in the language.

"We try to talk in sign language," Pennington said. The idea is that immersion in the language will increase fluency.

Nan's husband, Charles Pennington, who teaches noncredit ASL at the college, serves as the club's adviser.

"The club provides them with a weekly practice session," he said.

Like many other club members, he does not rely on the language for day-to-day communication. In his case, Pennington learned ASL because his parents use it.

"Most of the students are not deaf," Nan Pennington said. Instead, they are learning the language so they can work as interpreters or teachers, she said.

Lisa Matiz, the president of the club, said ASL is important for her job as a teacher for Early Head Start in Shady Side.

"It helped me communicate with a little girl with a disability," she said.

Matiz said she'd long been interested in sign language and knew a little about it before she began taking ASL classes at the college. The club, she said, helps her improve her skills as she works toward an associate degree in childhood development.

Charles Pennington said the club had been active in the past, but it had become dormant before he got involved about a year

and a half ago. He said the need for ASL interpreters is strong.

The language does not translate perfectly into the written word, he said, because the sentence structure is different and certain words may be left out.

In an e-mail interview, Bruce said she enjoys performing for

hearing audiences, though she sometimes feels pressure as a representative of the deaf community.

"Performing for the 'hearing community' is an honor and at the same a huge responsibility," she wrote. "When I am in the middle of the stage, I feel it's not

just me, Trix Bruce, showing off my talents, but it is me the deaf person representing the thousands of deaf persons in America, showing the hearing community that I can do something, that I have the talent to 'woo' them -- to 'entice' them with the language of the hands."

She added: "I think I have the best job in the world, doing what I love to do and meeting a lot of people. I can't really complain."

Tickets for the show are \$5 for Anne Arundel Community College students; \$8 for everyone else.