

# The Bandera PROPHET

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Bandera High grad uses comedy to spread message of hope and acceptance

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The Bandera Prophet

From a pool of more than 1,300, only four people were chosen this year to receive The Second City scholarship - a mentorship and training program for comedic talents, carried out in partnership with Saturday Night Live. Morgan Van Dyne, 2012 Bandera High School Graduate, was one of those four.

Van Dyne, whose family lives in Pipe Creek, moved to Chicago six years ago, in pursuit of a career in comedy.

“I moved here to do the conservatory program at The Second City,” Van Dyne said, who continues to perform there regularly, as well as in other theatres and online via social media, including TikTok and Instagram. Bringing a diverse perspective to the table, Van Dyne has harnessed laughter to wield as a navigational tool in the world of mental health, disability and identity. Strapping it on like a well-worn backpack, comedy has become the medium Van Dyne channels to both cope with and demystify uncomfortable issues.

“Comedy helps me feel like I have control in my life. People get a little tense when you bring mental health up. It’s the same thing with queer identities. As amazing as it was to grow up in Bandera, it’s still a very taboo thing,” Van Dyne said, who also suffers from polychondritis, a rare autoimmune disease. “It causes a lot of pain and bodily deterioration. Making jokes about it, I hope I can make people more comfortable knowing that people with physical differences are 100 percent capable of doing anything that they want to.”

Voted class clown in high school, Van Dyne said the pursuit of comedy has always been an easy choice.

“Depression and anxiety run in my family. I think a lot of my comic ability stems from that,” Van Dyne said, who added SNL is also a household tradition. “Everybody watches SNL in my family. [Being on] SNL is the ultimate dream.”

No stranger to the industry, Van Dyne has written shows for The Second City Training Center, The Annoyance and The Playground, and participated in many stand-up showcases, including the Who Dis Showcase - a comedy show featuring disabled comedians. Van Dyne has a couple of film credits under the belt, including Granny Shot - an Amazon Prime movie, and this week was approached by Umbrella Academy cast member Ken Hall for participation in his radio show in Toronto.

Training has already begun with The Second City.

“We started last week. It’s been incredibly fun and really cool getting personalized coaching about writing and finding ways to tell unique stories without it coming across too personal, so that the masses can relate,” Van Dyne said.

The end goal of this year’s tailored classes and private coaching is to go to New York and audition to be a cast member on SNL.

“Seventy percent of the people on SNL have trained at The Second City. It’s definitely the avenue to SNL,” Van Dyne said.

There’s no guarantee this experience will result in a job at SNL, but Van Dyne already has a toe in the door. Second City alumni include Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Gilda Radner, Peter Aykroyd, Vanessa Bayer, Jim Belushi, Aidy Bryant, Brian Doyle-Murray, Rachel Dratch, Robin Duke, Chris Farley, Tina Fey, Mary Gross, Bill Hader, Tim Kazurinsky, David Koechner, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Tim Meadows, Jerry Minor, Alex Moffat, Bill Murray, Mike Myers, Mike O’Brien, Bob Odenkirk, Amy Poehler, Chris Redd, Tim Robinson, Tony Rosato, Horatio Sanz, Martin Short, Cecily Strong, Jason Sudeikis and Nancy Walls.

“I’m really excited about all of this,” Van Dyne said, reiterating the ultimate plan is, through comedy, to send a message of self-acceptance

to all, especially those at home. “I have a special place in my heart for Bandera. I would like anyone who needs to know, ‘I can be who I am and there’s nothing wrong with that.’”

Van Dyne can be found on Instagram at [@MorganVanDyne](#).