

Jeff Dunham provides laughs

*Comedian comes to
US Cellular Coliseum on
Valentines Day*

HILARY DIRKS
News Editor

On a chilly February 14, many couples could be seen going out to the movies, having a romantic dinner or simply spending a quiet evening together. However, in downtown Bloomington, many couples were participating in an activity that was a little out of the ordinary for the romantic day.

Jeff Dunham, a ventriloquist and comedian who appeared on shows such as "Comedy Central Presents" and the "Late Show with David Letterman", performed two shows at the U.S. Cellular Coliseum.

"The original show at 8 pm sold out," said Melissa Ash, the Marketing Director at the Coliseum. "So we scheduled another show at 3 pm."

There were 7,000 people for the sold out 8 pm show, and the 3 pm show had about 4,800 people, making for a total of around 11,800 people who saw the two shows.

Ben Haner, also known as the "Guitar Guy" opened the shows with some jokes and original songs.

"He was naturally funny," said senior Valarie Watson who, along with senior Daniel Flink, went to the 8 pm show. "He did a really good job warming up the crowd."

After Haner's pre-show and a 15 minute intermission, the Coliseum took on an air akin to a rock concert when Jeff Dunham took the stage, beginning the show with a quick story about how he and Haner had a run-in with some U.S. Marines.

Once the story was over, Dunham brought out his first character Walter, a grumpy retired old man who does not like anything, especially the dreary Illinois weather. Following Walter was the incompetent Achmed the dead terrorist, who sang the "Blew myself up Blues" accompanied by Haner.

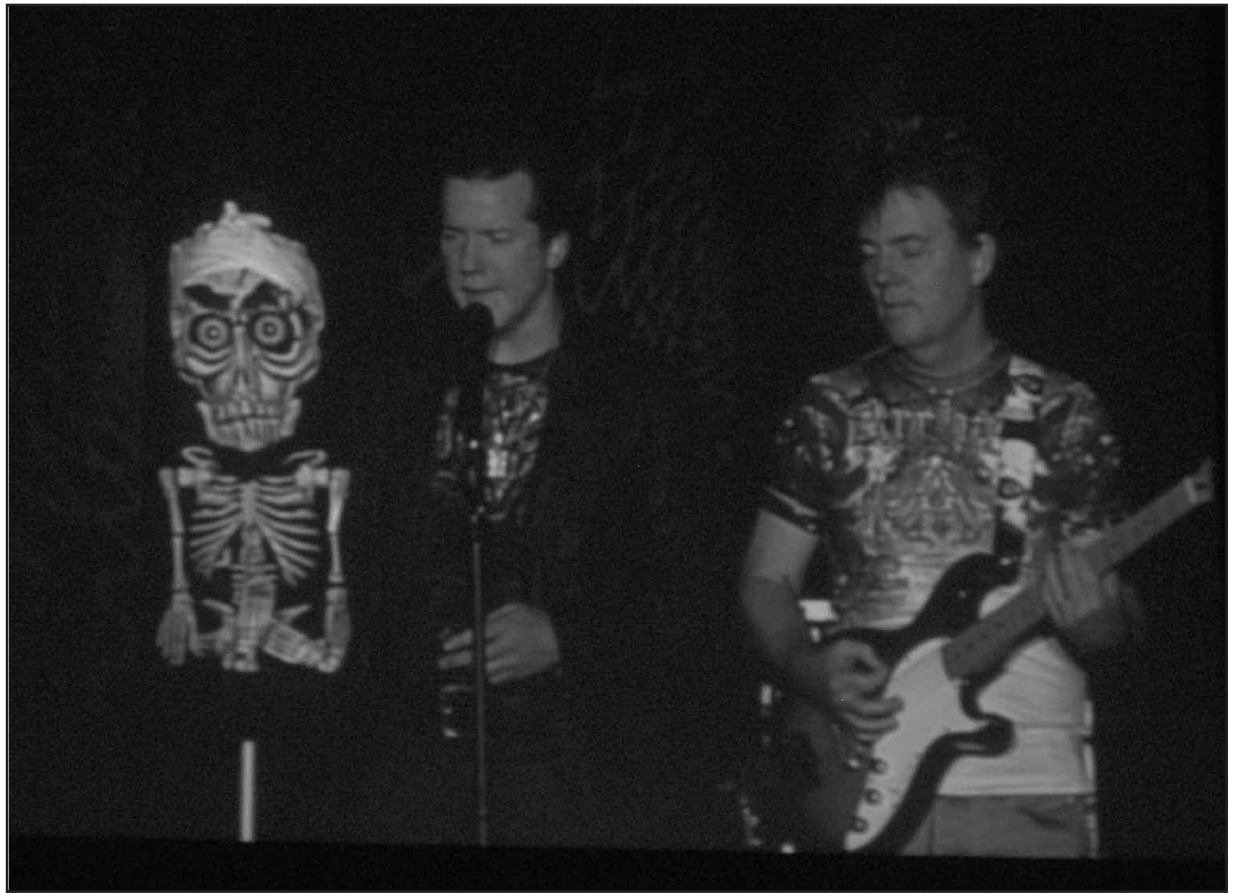
After the final "Silence! I'll kill you!" from Achmed, Dunham brought out the zany character Peanut, a monkey looking creature with fly-away green hair who joked about various things from Chinese take-out to a ski vacation with all of Dunham's other character. Breaking the one-on-one rhythm that he set up, Dunham then brought out Jose Jalapeno on a stick having a three way conversation with himself instead of a comparatively simple two-way conversation.

Finally, once the show seemed almost over, Dunham produced the final character Bubba J, the NASCAR-loving hill-billy, upon request from many emails prior to the show.

The show lasted approximately two and a half hours.

"I thought he was very funny," said Flink. "He is just as funny in real life as he is on TV or YouTube."

"It was very original," said Watson. "I think what he does takes a lot of talent."



Jeff Dunham performs with his puppet Achmed and opening act Ben Haner.

Hilary Dirks

HYPE promotes student involvement

TRACY CARPENTER
Student Life Writer

All year long, HYPE, a club at Bloomington High School, has been actively involved at the school.

HYPE, which stands for Helping Youth Progress and Excel, meets every Wednesday in the HYPE office. The group was started by Jay Shannon, a counselor from Project Oz.

"Jay does a fantastic job at making sure each member is making the right choices in school," said senior and HYPE member R.J. Devine.

During the meetings, the group plans their upcoming events.

"We do a lot to better the school," said senior and HYPE member of two years Ashley Brown.

The majority of the club's activities are aimed to better BHS.

"We're focused on making Bloomington a better school," said Brown.

The idea of helping the school is the reason why several students decided to join the club. However, some students get involved in the club for other reasons.

"I wanted to do something that would look good for colleges," said senior and HYPE member of two years Alli Kirk.

Brown joined the club for different reasons.

"A lot of my friends said HYPE was good and fun," said Brown.

The club's list of activities is endless, including activities such as a racial justice summit, poetry slam, and a day of reading to kindergarteners at Washington Elementary School.

"We also attend conferences and represent Bloomington High School," said Devine.

A favorite activity of HYPE is during BHS's prom week. During a school day that week, HYPE members dress themselves to look dead. They use face paint and makeup to appear as if they were just involved in a horrible accident. Taped on their stomachs is a story on how their character died. The HYPE members also aren't allowed to talk all day.

"My favorite activity of HYPE is dressing up dead for prom," said Kirk.

While dressed up, the students lay down in the student center dead during their lunch hour, while several of their fellow students watch. This is done to promote the reality of drunk driving, and to hopefully minimize the amount of underage drinking and driving on prom night.

Overall, the ultimate goal of HYPE is for BHS students to become aware of several problems that students may face, and to thus better the school.

"HYPE allows students at BHS to be themselves, express their character, and serve others," said Devine.