

I & A COVER STORY

HP native tackles nationwide radio

CHRISTA ROOKS, Editor

There is nothing more rewarding than pursuing your passion.

For Highland Park native and radio host Lisa Wolf, that has certainly been the case.

Wolf's radio career started in 2009 when she auditioned for a spot on Hollywood 360, a new radio show started by Carl Amari.

"The timing was right, and we had good chemistry and good rapport," she said.

Wolf began filling in for others on the show, which led to her landing her own segment. This was followed by another segment, and finally, she was named co-host of the show, which features all things entertainment.

While this marked the beginning of her radio career, it really came as an extension of her love of theater, which began much sooner.

Wolf grew up in Highland Park and attended Highland Park High School, where she participated in the theater program. This continued through college, where she earned a bachelor's degree in psychology, and two master's degrees: one in advertising and one in education.

"Always through all of that I had been doing acting as a passion," she said.

Following college, she became involved in theater in Chicago, taking classes and getting training in voice-over work, which led to her radio audition. Wolf also can be seen in local commercials.

The gig at Hollywood 360, which is now syndicated and runs across the U.S., helped feed her love for theater.

"[As] part of the Hollywood 360 show, I do theater reviews and I have the opportunity to go to any and every great show that opens



Highland Park native Lisa Wolf (right) co-host of two radio shows, Hollywood 360 and WGN Radio Theatre, poses with fellow host Carl Amari (center) and Mike Gastala, executive producer of WGN Radio Theatre. PHOTOS SUBMITTED

in Chicago," she said. "I go to as many as I can."

This also allows her to spread her love to her listeners. "I have the opportunity to say look, I just saw this great show, and I loved it so much I would like to have the opportunity to have my listeners to see it too," she said. "I will give away theater tickets and restaurant certificates. It fuels my passion for theater as well."

As well as doing theater reviews, Wolf also interviews celebrities coming through Chicago, including Ernie Banks, Whoopi Goldberg and Rhea Perlman.

"[A favorite thing] is having the opportunity to do celebrity interviews," she said. "This radio show has been a platform for me to meet these people and talk to them one on one."

Wolf's favorite celebrity interview was with Laurie Metcalf, she said.

"She is so introspective," Wolf said. "She's just smart and she's honest and she's very raw and very emotive. I felt like it was so above and beyond a topical interview with her."

Several months ago, Wolf's radio career took another step forward when she and Amari launched a new show on WGN Radio called WGN Radio Theatre.

"We feel very lucky to be part of the WGN team," she said.

The show, which runs Sunday nights from 11 p.m.-2 a.m., features three classic radio shows (one per hour) from the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Amari has a collection of over 100,000 classic shows that he licenses from all the original



Lisa Wolf serves as co-host of WGN Radio Theatre every Sunday night from 11 p.m.-2 a.m.

holders to play on the radio.

In addition to playing the classics, Wolf and Amari also hold contests, and give listeners a chance to call in and chat with them.

Most surprising to Wolf is the age range of the listeners.

"When we first started our show, we expected to have an [age] 50-plus listenership," she said. "We find more and more that other generations have the opportunity to be exposed to [and enjoy] things they wouldn't ordinarily have."

Wolf's favorite part of doing the radio shows comes down to interacting with her listeners.

"I really love the communication with our listeners," she said. "I love that they have the opportunity to call in and talk to me. ... They just like to feel that we're just normal people, just regular people, that have this opportunity to do a radio show."



Hosts Lisa Wolf (left) and Carl Amari goof off while at the WGN radio station.