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Touring For Laughs In A Serious Cause

June 03, 1999 | By AMY ELLIS; Courant Staff Writer

VH-I has nothing on Snapple. The popular soft-drink company has its very own Diva, and her name is Wendy Kaufman.

Kaufman, who became popular after appearing in Snapple commercials, is touring with comedian Todd Glass in Snapple and Comic Relief's "The Jokes on Us" comedy show, which will be in Hartford Tuesday. The tour is trying to raise \$100,000 to aid the homeless.

Although Kaufman is no longer in the commercials -- with her ebullient personality and Long Island accent -- to a lot of people she's still "made from the best stuff on earth."

Kaufman, as friendly on the phone as she is in her commercials, spoke to us from Chicago:

Tell us about the tour.

What we've been doing is going to the top 15 Snapple-selling cities as well as great Comic Relief cities where they have branch offices, and we are having these "Jokes on Us" shows. Comics from each of these cities join us, and each does a five- or six-minute set. We challenge people at the end of the comedy show to come on up and to see if they are hilarious, or whether they are not. We give prizes -- Snapple -- and it's just like a 45-minute/hour show.

How is the tour going?

We're having a lot of fun doing it. I'm having a couple of laughs, but I'm a really bad joke teller. So what's great for me is I get to come up and say hello, but I sign pictures ... just talk to the fans, find out what's doing.

How long have you been on tour?

Well, the tour started right in the beginning of May. It goes until June 19. What do you do during your free time on the tour?

I just went to two movies. On Saturday I went to see "Notting Hill." I loved it. I give it four bottles up.

But what flavors?

I give it four peach teas!

Do you get recognized a lot?

You know, I used to get recognized everywhere because I had so many commercials on, you know, all at once and over a three-year period. ... That was really extraordinary. Now you know what happens: People look at me, and they know that they know me from somewhere, but they don't know where. Like they met me at a party somewhere.

Did you ever think you would become the Snapple Diva?

(Laughing) Are you kidding me? No. You know it's funny --and I really tell everybody this. I loved my job. I started in the order department. It was fascinating to learn the distributors, and it was fascinating to learn all the flavors and how they produced it and shipped it. I just love business. That always interested me. And what happened was I soon noticed these letters coming in, and I started to take the letters home with me at night and to really handle them and to respond to every person who took the time for us. And I didn't do it as anything other than a passion for people.

And, of course, the letter-writing became huge. Any marriage proposals?

Yes, yes. In my heyday, I absolutely have had marriage proposals. Mostly from prisoners.

We love that you are back with Snapple.

I did end up going back to Snapple, and I was thrilled to go back. I love Snapple, and I'll always love Snapple. And I'm proud to do the appearances. But now I'm an independent contractor, so I make appearances. I no longer work in the marketing department.

What do you do besides making Snapple appearances?

I went back to school, and now I learned how to trade stock options. I have the best time, and that has become my full-time job. But I still make appearances, and I love working for them.

I have to ask, what is your favorite Snapple flavor?

They gave me my flavor two years ago, my very own flavor: Wendy's Tropical Inspiration. And I helped make it with them, so I love it. It's an orange peach tangerine, and it's also called Orange Tropic, and I'm very proud about it ... and I also love the

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mango -- Mango Madness. ... And I love the peach tea. Those probably are my three favorite flavors.

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