



Photo by Alyssa Lloyd

Corner Gas writer, producer, and front-man, Brent Butt, brings the crowd to tears at the Empire Theatre Wednesday. Butt, a lifelong comedian, says if he could choose any career to follow for the rest of his life it would be stand-up.

Comedian the 'Butt' of many jokes

By Alyssa Lloyd

"I think it had something to do with a bit of authenticity," Brent Butt explains about why he thinks Canadians were so drawn to Corner Gas.

"When we were making Corner Gas, we didn't think anybody was going to watch. We kind of thought we were tricking the network into giving us money for a TV show no one was going to watch," Butt jokes.

"We just ended up concentrating on do-

ing a show that we liked and we thought was good, and I think people responded to that. I think they could tell they weren't being sold a bill of goods," Butt says, humbly describing the approach they took to create Corner Gas and why people may have enjoyed it so much.

Asked how hard it is to let go of the Corner Gas cast and crew who were practically family, Butt says, "It was difficult. It was something very special that we had, and you don't know if you're ever going to have anything like that again."

"But I really believe it was the right de-

cision. If we kept going, the show would have started to falter, and it was too special to me to let it wither on the vine and die, get old and sick.

"At a certain point, you have to step away and let something be what it was, but it was very difficult."

On the road again for a standup tour, Butt recalls days gone past and some of the highlights along the way.

"I had wanted to do standup since I was 12. That's when I made the decision I wanted to do this, or at least try to. When I was in high school, I wrote some origi-

nal material and performed standup for the first time and the response was better than I could have ever hoped. It gave me all the encouragement I needed to think 'Well, maybe I can do this for a living, and that was a huge pivotal show for me.'

Although Butt has been a writer, producer, actor, director and performer in many of his projects, if he had to choose one, he would choose performing stand-up on stage for a live audience.

"I think I'm a performer first, either on camera or on stage. If I could only do one of those two things, I know that standup

comedy is the only thing I could never walk away from. Everything else is fantastic and I feel blessed that I get to do it, but, if I could only do one thing, I know that I would be miserable if I was in a position where I couldn't do standup comedy anymore."

He pauses before adding: "I'd probably go mad."

Butt is currently travelling Canada performing standup in a lot of the small towns where he got his start.

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No overnight place to go for Belleville's homeless

By Maggie Naylor

The news of the homeless deaths in Toronto has confronted Canada's response to our homeless population, and what we are doing to stop these events from continuing.

Lack of effort may come to the mind of an individual but I can assure you that is not the case.

The nearest official homeless shelter to Belleville is in Kingston about an hour drive away, and fifteen and a half hour walk.

In total, Kingston has 86 beds to offer the homeless, 111 if you include housing for domestically abused women and their children.

Belleville on the other hand, thanks to the Canadian Mental Health Association has 33 beds available with only 18 beds designated for adults.

This is not a case of lack of need. The Red Cross, in charge of disaster management in the area (including personal disasters: homelessness) can tell you that.

The Red Cross Hastings County Branch takes one third of the calls for level one disasters (homelessness) in all of Ontario. Considering Ontario takes up more of Canada's population than any other province, it's safe to assume it has one of the highest call volumes in all of Canada.

So why aren't we the community with the same problem on our streets? "Our service and the service of the Salvation Army and other partner agencies work very closely with the



Photo by Maggie Naylor

Doreen and Phenix Hewitt stand in the lunchline in the Salvation Army building on Thursday Jan. 15, 2015. Salvation Army is one of the many organization set in Belleville to help those who need it and opens their building to many people for lunch at 11:30 everyday but Wednesday.

police and the hospital, so we try to make sure people don't fall through the cracks," says David Allester lead volunteer for the Red Cross.

Considering the police are constant-

ly patrolling the community, it only makes sense they would find people in tough situations and call up the Red Cross, sometimes driving them to the location of their accommodations. No

one wants to see here what happened in Toronto. "We understand that that could be a reality, we're trying as best we can to put steps and safeguards in place so that will not happen in our

community," says Marlene Gray, Belleville's Police Inspector.

A lot of the time the public doesn't understand what makes people homeless, and why certain people need homes if even just temporarily.

Communication from the Red Cross and the hospital is necessary because sometimes people come in, like a caller this Christmas Eve who was from out of town, needed to get cancer treatments at the Belleville General Hospital for near a week, and couldn't afford accommodations. They didn't know anyone in the town to house them so they called the Red Cross rather than sleeping outside.

"It's really hard to generalize and a lot of people do. They have this particular stereotype in their mind and it probably relates to you know, a panhandler on the corner you saw or something and its much more complex than that," says Allester.

Many times it's a family that can't pay their rent and are in the process of finding somewhere new.

"The sad part is," says Sandy Sidsworth, Executive Director for the CMHA, "as broad as you try to make that safety net, it doesn't always reach out to people, and then we hear the stories in Toronto and it's horrifying."

It's not always about money. Sometimes it's about community will, and when you have a community willing to work together how can you support it at [a federal] level to make sure things happen? That's my wish in a perfect world."