

<http://www.courierpostonline.com/story/entertainment/dining/eat-my-words/2017/03/10/wine-women-and-dena-blizzards-new-board-game/99016962/>

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Wine, women and Dena Blizzard's new board game



Dena Blizzard explains a prototype of Chardonnay Go to a group of guests at the Moorestown Community House last week. *(Photo: Tammy Paolino/Courier-Post)*

By Tammy Paolino

Ladies, imagine the baby or bridal showers you've attended, and all of those ice breaker games they concoct to get you to interact and laugh.

Bow and ribbon bikinis. Hot lingerie gift reveals. Honeymoon jokes. Spoons on string looped in and out of clothing in an awkward conga line.

Now imagine a board game that takes those sorts of shower antics to a whole new level – sort of like taking that bow-and-ribbon bikini, adding in a dash of Monopoly Chance cards and a generous helping of Cards Against Humanity outrageousness.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Last summer, Dena Blizzard was being pestered by her kids to play Pokemon Go, as the mobile app game took over the known world.

Wouldn't it be funny, thought the comedian and former Miss New Jersey, if there were a game like that for grown-ups. Only, you wouldn't wander the neighborhood seeking elusive cartoon characters, you would part your neighbor's shrubs or peek under their decks for hidden bottles and glasses of Chardonnay.



Dena Blizzard toasts all moms, everywhere, as part of her show 'One Funny Mother.' (Photo: Photo provided/Dena Blizzard)

Chardonnay Go was born, first through a Facebook Live video that stunned Blizzard with its 23 million – that’s 23 million! – views, making it one of Facebook's Top Ten Facebook Live videos of 2016.

WATCH: [CHARDONNAY GO EVENT VIDEO](#)

“So, you know, we make lots of videos,” recalls Blizzard, who, after a successful off-Broadway run is touring her one-woman show, “One Funny Mother,” that pokes fun at all things trying and tender about motherhood. The show is currently at Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, and will go on to Missouri, Florida and Iowa.

“That (video) went so ridiculously crazy! Before that, we’d get like 300, 400 views, so I had to stop and think, ‘OK, so what was it?’ You have to ask yourself, what did we do there? Of course it was timely, as Pokemon had just happened ... ”

What resonated for Blizzard was that the made-up game was celebrating the notion of women getting together to have fun – and sharing a bottle of wine.

“Why not create something – make something that is not just this one-hit wonder?”



Chardonnay Go offers plenty of chances to raise a toast, but you don't have to drink to have fun playing the game. (Photo: Tammy Paolino/Courier-Post)

The result, Chardonnay Go, is in prototype stage now – and Blizzard is having a blast inviting groups of women to gather to play it in informal “focus groups,” with pretty hilarious results. It is promoted as “a board game for wine lovers, moms and other shameless people.”

Together with fellow Courier-Post reporters Shannon Eblen and Carly Romalino, I got to play Chardonnay Go recently during a benefit for the Moorestown Community House.

“This is about celebrating women and getting together,” says Blizzard, adding that while wine can be a fun component of play, you do not need to drink to have fun with Chardonnay Go. (There are spaces on the board, which is a bit reminiscent of Candy Land’s board, that call for a toast, but among the glasses of white and red wines raised in Moorestown there were plenty of bottles of water, too.)

“It was absolutely created for women,” says Blizzard, whose comedy shows and “One Funny Mother” production are all about the sorts of things many harried moms can relate to – from chauffeuring kids in your pajamas to considering folding laundry “time for me.”

“Then women started saying, ‘My husband wants to play, too!’ ... I’ve played it with men in the game, too, and it is about a hundred times funnier.”

No doubt, as depending on what cards you pick up, you may be called upon to Eskimo kiss the person to your right while prattling on about bacon recipes, or simulate a lap dance while naming all of the Great Lakes.

The game starts, not with a roll of the dice, but with the last person to have had sex going first.

The night I played, the Moorestown Community House was in a frenzy, with women pretending to ride carousel horses while calling out types of lunch meat, and spooning each other while naming past presidents.

I got to embarrass myself by slow motion boxing, mimicking child birth and offering up pseudonyms for body parts, all while being the responsible designated driver.

“The second misconception is you have to be drinking to play. You don’t. We may make that a line on the box,” Blizzard said.



Shannon Eblen (left) spoons Carly Romalino while whispering sweet nothings during a round of Chardonnay Go at the Moorestown Community House. (Photo: Tammy Paolino/Courier-Post)

While most people get into the spirit of the thing, you can decline any challenge and be put into Time Out, which means you turn your chair around and miss the fun for a bit. (You can take your wine glass with you).

Initially, Blizzard considered both a Skype app game or a card game. A card game version was fun, but got confusing, as no one seemed to know if they were winning or losing. The board game comes packed in a wine bottle box, with the game set in a vineyard. The goal? To reach the tasting room, of course.

“The feedback on the board game has been overwhelmingly good,” says Blizzard, whose Kickstarter campaign made its goal of \$28,000 several days ahead of the Saturday deadline. The funds will allow Blizzard to create and sell the first edition of the game.

WATCH: [DENA ON FACEBOOK LIVE](#)

Her time spent watching people play – everywhere from her kitchen table to toy trade shows – is resulting in some refinements to the boards and the rules. So far, she’s played with at least 200 people in the course of eight weeks – from husbands and wives, mothers and daughters and even a group of people in recovery. (“WE’LL tell you if it’s really funny,” they said.)

“The feedback and development in such a short time has been amazing. It’s only been about five months, which is pretty quick.”

While she waits for her game to debut, Blizzard will continue to perform in “One Funny Mother,” although her production company has hired a second actress to perform in the show so it can be two places at once, a la Rob Beckerman’s “Defending the Caveman.”



Chardonnay Go influences include Monopoly, charades, Candy Land -- even Cards Against Humanity. (Photo: Tammy Paolino/Courier-Post)

Last fall, Blizzard was also one of five finalists to cohost "Kelly" with Kelly Ripa, although she didn't win. She continues to draw a big audience in her weekly “Topsy Tuesday” Facebook live shows, shot at her kitchen table.

On Saturday, April 29, Blizzard will headline an evening of comedy for veterans – Salute.Laugh.Give – at the Ritz Theatre Company, to benefit Operation Yellow Ribbon.

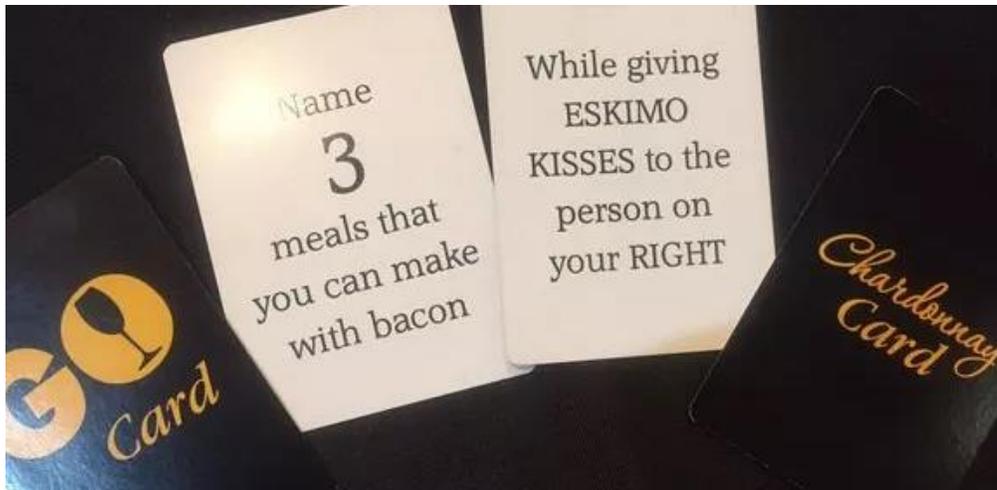
Blizzard’s big hope for Chardonnay Go is that it inspires women, in particular, to get together to be silly, relax and have fun, “and not just on the sidelines of your kid’s soccer game.”

She especially relishes seeing women start playing together as strangers, and walk away as friends. Says my coworker Carly Romalino, "You got to know the private life of strangers and coworkers very quickly, which helped me want to get a little bit silly and not mind sharing about myself."

“The game is meant to be played, but it’s natural for women to just kind of connect," says Blizzard.

"They might lose track of the game at some point, but it’s a great way to just ... be together. That’s what it’s meant to be, a great connecting game.

“It’s crazy and it’s fun. I’m really excited about it. But it doesn’t feel quite real until we actually get them and try to put them in the shops.”



Part of playing Chardonnay Go involves picking up two cards simultaneously -- one offering physical challenges, the other requiring you to, in creator Dena Blizzard's words, 'recite absolute nonsense.' (Photo: Tammy Paolino/Courier-Post)

More about Dena

Dena Blizzard: Visit www.denablizzard.com/ and <https://www.facebook.com/denablizzard/>

For One Funny Mother: <http://www.onefunnymother.com/>

Chardonnay Go: www.chardonnaygogame.com/

SALUTE.LAUGH.GIVE

Dena Blizzard will headline an evening of comedy for veterans on Saturday, April 29 at the Ritz Theatre Company in Haddon Township. The event will benefit Operation Yellow Ribbon of South Jersey and will also include Ron Kelly, Bob Marsdale and Tommy Highland.

Doors are at 7 p.m. for small plate snacks and a cash bar. Show is at 8 p.m.

The event is sponsored by the Courier-Post, One Funny Mother, Ritz Theatre Company, Sanders Home Services, Humor Hound, SLK Partners, Mission BBQ, Double Nickel Brewing and Camden County.

Tickets are \$22.50 in advance, \$27.50 at the door. Sanders Home Services has sponsored 40 seats to be given to veterans and their guests. To order tickets, visit <https://secure.wcit.net/ritztheatreco/remote.seating1.php>

Veterans may request tickets (proof of service required, while supplies last) at <https://slkpromotion.wufoo.com/forms/salute-laugh-give-veterans-ticket-reservation/>