

CULTURE | ONE-WOMAN SHOW HAS SERIOUS TOPIC

Play deals with eating disorders

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Could your 7-year-old be dieting?
Could your 11-year-old be bulimic?

If you think not, parents of pre-adolescent girls, you might want to check out statistics that indicate compulsive eating disorders are beginning at an increasingly earlier age. Twenty-first century parents need to be aware of the power of the socially mandated, prevalent image of "the thin girl."

The Thin Line, a 30-minute dramatic performance that illuminates the realities of eating disorders, deals with this painful topic in a powerful way. Activist and playwright Cathy Plourde created the piece to raise awareness among parents and pre-teens/teens.

The one-woman show presents one girl's struggle with an eating disorder and the effect on those close to her.

Every performance is followed by a panel discussion with experts in the field. "The point of the show is the discussion afterward. We want to use theater to provoke social awareness and 'out' this problem as a community problem," said Abigail Rose Solomon who will be performing *The Thin Line* at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 14, at the Center of Creative Arts (COCA). It is free and open to the public.

Solomon is one of several professional actresses who have been performing *The Thin Line* across the country since 1999. In a phone interview from her Los Angeles home, Solomon said the presentation is a benign way to broach a serious subject and the point is "to provoke discussion."

The play deals with real facts and encourages an inquisitive audience to ask questions during the panel discussion.

"The best results [of these performances] are when the people can talk and ask questions. Just to get them to talk, express themselves is already fighting the disease," Solomon said. "An eating disorder really is people taking out on their body what they cannot express verbally."

The value of the panel, Solomon said, is to show that help is available and to encourage the afflicted, friends and family to seek help. Solomon's performance will be the first in COCA's Women CenterStage 2003-2004 series. She is one of COCA's Emerging Artists, a program that recognizes talented young performers in various disciplines.

St. Louis is familiar to Solomon

who has "deep roots" here. Her grandparents, Eric P. and Evelyn Edison Newman, are life-long St. Louisans and her mother, Linda Newman Schapiro, grew up here. "My grandparents met when they lived across the street [from each other] and I think my grandfather has been in the same house since he was 11," Solomon said.

A professional actress who lives "between New York and L.A.," Solomon has performed in film, theater and television, including appearances on *Law and Order* and *Sex and the City*.

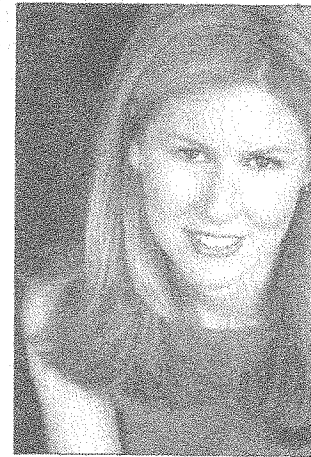
Solomon said she performed *The Thin Line* in St. Louis at Castlewood Treatment Center, which

is the sponsor of the COCA program, during a parents' weekend.

Being close to the subject, what's her take?

"The best thing a parent can do is never ever say anything about weight and never go on a diet," Solomon said.

The performance will be presented to teens at Clayton High School and Cor Jesu Academy on Oct. 16. The COCA performance — Tuesday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m. — is free and open to the public. For information, call 314-725-6555.



Abigail Solomon