Contestant: **K-3**

“I talk fast, you’ll get used to that. I also have a ridiculous laugh,” said Kevin Wanzer before launching into one of his signature chuckles. The laugh is indeed ridiculous. A cross between the squeak of a clown shoe and a very high-pitched wind chimes. His overall presence in the room was really almost cartoonish. Of course, as a comedian, Wanzer’s sense of ridiculousness extends far beyond his unconventional laughing and appearance.

Wanzer’s career began in 10th grade. Its beginnings were a little rough. The Indiana native snuck out of high school to attend a showtime competition that was looking for funny people. “I didn’t do well at all,” said Wanzer. “In fact I was named the unfunniest person for that day.” This title was partly earned as a result of the disguise he has worn so he wouldn't be recognized by school mates or friends. This elaborate outfit included an Annie wig and a jazzercise sweatband. His eyebrows upturned in melancholic fashion as he pointed at old photos of himself, before he dissoved into laughter once again.

Wanzer’s career has since had a new development. Turning the ridiculous into a serious message about love and acceptance. Blending his speaking skills and charisma with his passion for comedy, he authored the book “Choose to Love” and has become a member of the National Speaker’s Association.

Wanzer particularly emphasizes LGBTQ issues in his work. Not only does Wanzer identify as gay, he also has a transgender daughter, Scout. Perhaps the best illustration of Wanzer’s use of comedy as power are the funny personal anecdotes he vivaciously told to depict the importance of the message he spreads. He remembered the first time he realized his child was transgender. “As we’re sitting there [on the floor of Scout’s school] having lunch, it’s right before Halloween. And on this table, there’s these hats. And the boy hats are over there. They’re wizard hats,” said Wanzer. “And the only difference between the wizard’s hats and the witch’s hats is that the witch’s hats have brims.” Wanzer then tried to make conversation with his [then] son, but without any success. Finally, his son admitted he desired to look at the witch's hats, and his mood visibly changed when he was able to wear those hats. “Christopher [my son] looks at me and says, at five years old, ‘Dad, I stand with the wizards, but I am a witch in my head.’” Wanzer immediately knew what he meant. Although there were struggles, the two eventually learned to bond over vacuum cleaners and create many iconic memories.

Above all, Wanzer preaches acceptance. Using Hawaiian vernacular, he illustrated an impactful point about the growing mentality of hate in America and how to combat it. “I believe that if you really boil it all down there's fear and there’s love. There's nothing in between,” he mused. “When you’re born, you’re born with two fears. You're born with the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises.” Infants are later able to overcome these fears.” The deal is, you have a choice of how to react to the negative things in your life,” he began. “What I leave people with is ALOHA. We all know of the word aloha. It means hello, it means goodbye, it means I love you. What I use it as is a metaphor for how we connect to others. ‘Alo’ is also the presence of something ‘ha’ is breath and spirit.”

Wanzer was the very embodiment of breath and spirit as he addressed the room with a comical grace, and used all that he could to represent and defend his message of peace.