TV actors’ advice to NMSU students: Believe in yourself
By MIKE COOK

Two highly successful television actors were in Las Cruces last week for a presentation and to work with students in the New Mexico State University Theatre Arts Department on both the craft and the business of acting.

Jane Sibbett, best known for her role as Carol Willick on “Friends,” and Eric Lutes, who played Del Cassidy on “Caroline in the City,” advised the actors in the department to be creative, work together, make good choices and have integrity as they audition, perform and pursue acting as a career.

The class is taught by department head Wil Kilroy.

Sibbett and Lutes also said it was important to audition for as many parts in plays, films, television shows and commercials as possible. “Take any chance you can to read for anything,” Lutes said.

Sibbett said she had many friends who didn’t succeed as actors because “they couldn’t handle the disappointment when they didn’t get cast. You’ve got to be like a duck – if you don’t get that part, you’ve got to let it roll off you,” she said.

“Everything is a learning process,” Lutes said. “That’s where you grow.”

“Make choices, be interesting” when you audition for a part, Lutes said. “Don’t be safe. Be creative. Be believable and interesting.

“Believe in yourself. When you walk into an audition, tell yourself, ‘This is me. I’m coming to do my thing. I’ve done my homework.’”

It’s also important to remember that everyone knows everyone else in professional theatre, movies and television, he said. “It’s a small business. You always want to leave a good impression.”

Lutes, a Rhode Island native, was a successful actor on the East Coast. He moved to Los Angeles in 1995 to pursue more television work, and landed a role as station manager Tom Duran — one of the earliest gay characters on television — on the television show “Frazier.” That led to a lead role on “Caroline in the City.”

“I was a 15-year overnight success,” Lutes said.

Sibbett was studying theatre at UCLA when she got a chance to audition for a role on a soap opera in New York. She didn’t get the part, but she got a call from a casting director who used her as his reader for auditions. He later helped her find an agent, who got Sibbett her first acting job.

“It was perseverance for me,” she said.

Sibbett said studying the craft of acting, including voice, is also very important for an actor. “I learned how to speak, how to enunciate,” she said. Successful acting is preparation, integrity, showing up and having “respect for yourself, your fellow actors” and everyone else involved, Sibbett said.
In the back row, far left, is NMSU Theatre Arts Department head Wil Kilroy. Next to him is Eric Lutes, and next to Lutes is Jane Sibbett. They are shown with students in Kilroy’s Theatre Workshop class, which the television actors visited last week.

Eric Lutes and Jane Sibbett spoke to NMSU theater students about acting professionally.

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