

Comic's trial period  
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By Schuyler Kropf  
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### **Improv veteran Finch now faces crowds as prosecutor**

Timmy Finch was always easy to recognize around Charleston. For years he was the guy up on stage making people laugh with his off-the-wall improv act.

But nowadays you can find him in a Charleston County courtroom, helping put bad guys in jail.

Finch the comedian is now Finch the prosecutor. Since January, the "Have-Nots!" improvisational troupe actor has been an assistant solicitor in Charleston County, stepping away from comedy for courtroom justice.

Solicitor Scarlett Wilson said she initially had some hesitations about interviewing Finch when he finished at the Charleston School of Law, but the sessions went well. Finch was serious about what he wanted to do with his degree, she said, and the comedy schtick never materialized.

"It was professional, and that was good," she said. "I think he was looking for a career and to make a difference."

Photo by Grace Beahm  
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Timmy Finch has gone from an off-the-wall member of the 'Have-Nots!' improvisational troupe to an assistant solicitor for the Ninth Circuit, primarily prosecuting cases in the very serious area of violence against women.

And she recognized that Finch's talent for being comfortable in front of an audience would be a plus when he faced a judge and jury. "I needed the maturity that he does have," she said.

Finch jumped in full-bore. He was assigned to one of the Charleston office's more difficult places to work, handling cases of violence against women in a job funded by a federal grant.

Recent statistics show that the danger is real for women in South Carolina, which by some counts is ranked seventh in the nation for the number of females murdered by males.

Finch, 40, who hails from the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C., worked his way through law school while continuing his role with the Have-Nots! The two-hour period or so he spent on stage each session with co-members Brandy Sullivan and Greg Tavares was his relaxation to counter the grind of text books, he said.

One reason why law school came about was that for Finch, the facts of life had kicked in. He has been married for eight years and needed to find a career with a future. He and his wife also have a 3-year-old son.

Public service already was a part of his family; his father works for the federal Department of Education, and his mother is a nurse. "I'm happy I landed where I did," he said.

Finch admitted that the creative stage days with the Have-Nots! over the past 14 years were lucrative. Since their founding in 1996, the three have toured the country, most often hitting college towns and acting out far-running comedy skits based on audience shout-out suggestions.

He plans to continue appearing with the Have-Nots! this season, but not nearly as frequently. Five performances are scheduled during the Spoleto Festival this month.

Dealing with crimes against women is a far step from being on stage. "They are hard interviews to have because we talk about some very disturbing stuff," he said. He works through investigations by trying not to see his witnesses as victims first.

"I try to see the victim as a person, and try to empathize with them."

Wilson gives Finch high marks for what she's seen so far. "My hope is for him to become a career prosecutor," she said. "I get the sense from him that this is a calling."