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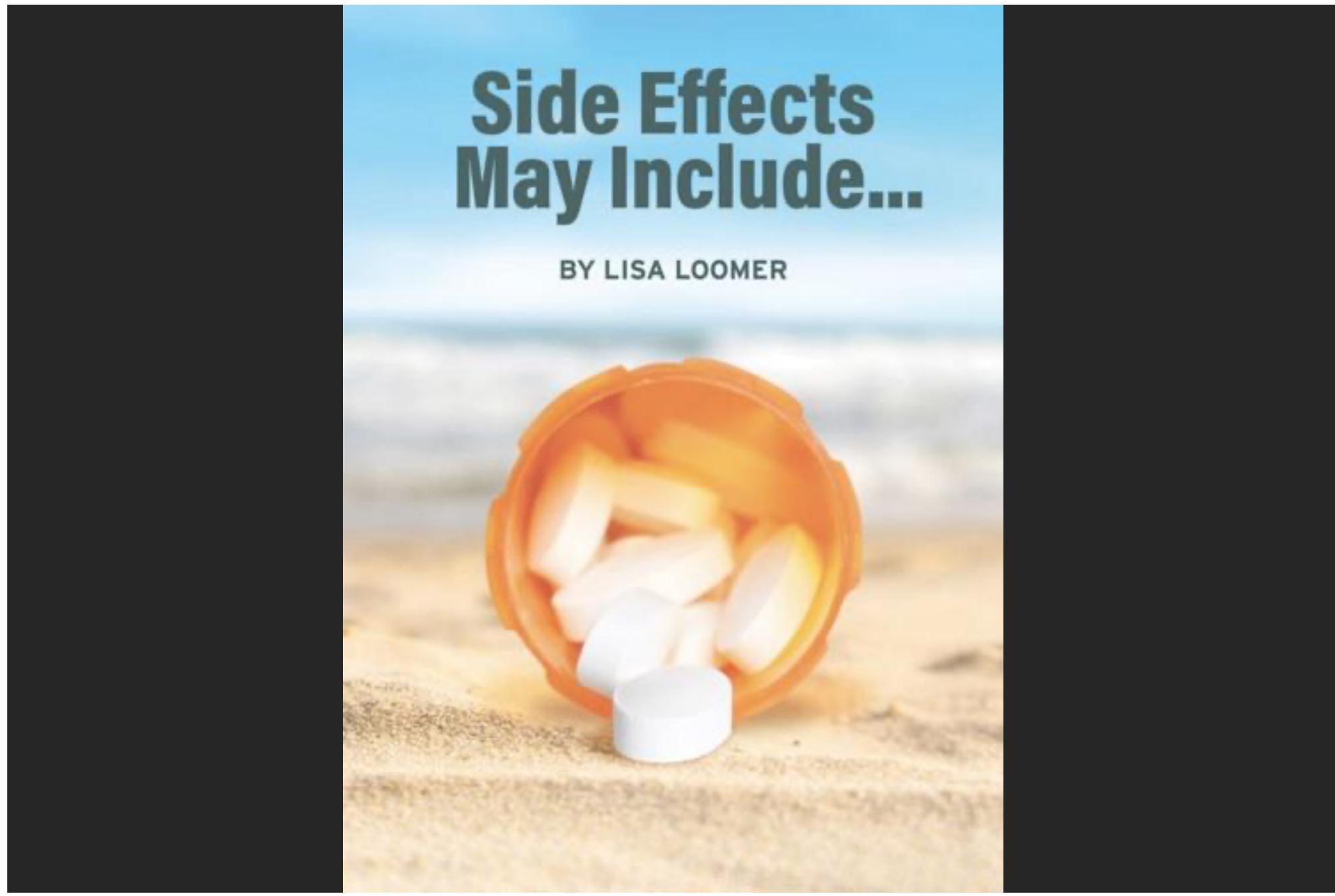
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Playwright from first season of CATF to return with new, autobiographical play

By Tabitha Johnston tjohnston@shepherdstownchronicle.com

Jun 16, 2025



"Side Effects May Include . . ." will be premiered in Studio 112 at Shepherd University, during the Contemporary American Theater Festival next month.
Courtesy photo



Loomer

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SHEPHERDSTOWN — During the first season of the Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF) in 1991, two plays were produced — one of which was by up-and-coming playwright Lisa Loomer.

Now, 24 years later, Loomer has achieved great success in her field, with a number of her works being performed on Broadway, including, currently, the musical "Real Women Have Curves."

This summer, Loomer will be returning for the first time to CATF for the premiere of her new play, "Side Effects May Include . . ."

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"To come from a Broadway musical to a new play festival is really interesting and actually really exciting for me," Loomer said. "I am really grateful for the opportunity to be here in a really interesting part of the country at this time. I'm very grateful to be more in nature and to just be able to quietly work on something very new, among other artists who are also working on something new."

Over the last couple of weeks, Loomer has been busy working closely together with "Side Effects May Include . . ." director Meredith McDonough, rewriting the play when necessary and giving input on various production ideas.

"It's never been fully staged, so I'm making a lot of changes and several discoveries along the way," Loomer said.

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The play will be performed in Studio 112 at Shepherd University throughout the month of July and into the beginning of August. According to Loomer, it is unique from her other works in that it is completely autobiographical.

"This is a very unusual play for me. I have never written anything autobiographical before," Loomer said. "This play is the truth. And I stuck to the truth for one reason — what happens in the play is so incredible and so Kafkaesque, as the lead character says, that I had to tell the truth in order to say, 'Look, this was our experience.' This is what happened to one person — my son."

At the age of 21, Loomer's son took a medication that gave him an unexpected side effect that remained after he stopped taking the medication. Six years later, he is still dealing with that chronic issue, Akathisia, according to Loomer.

"What the play advocates is one thing and one thing only — and that is informed consent. What I am saying in the play is that the public does not have enough information about the injury that my son received," Loomer said, mentioning her son asked her to write this play. "I am not against medication. I am not telling anyone what they should do or how they should approach whatever they are dealing with in their lives.

"All I'm interested in is provoking discussion," Loomer said. "We live in a very complex world and, I think, more and more, the ability to question is a really important thing. We shouldn't be afraid of questioning, and we shouldn't be afraid of sharing different points of view."

Tickets to the play can be purchased at <https://catf.org/> or by contacting the box office at 681-240-2283 or boxoffice@catf.org from 12-5 p.m. weekdays.

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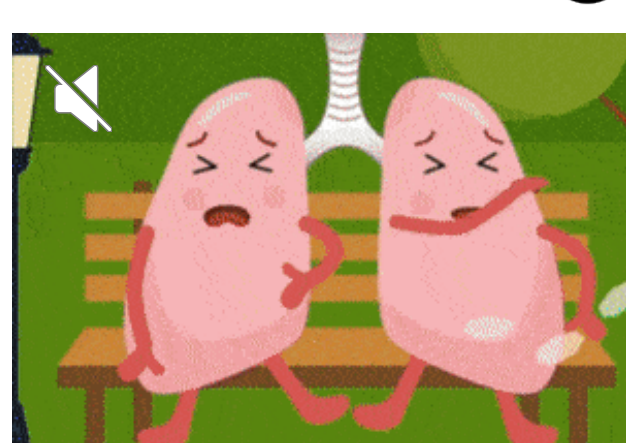
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