

Researcher Prepares for TEDxUSU Talk | CPD

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Vonda Jump

The press release says, "Utah State University's premier TEDx event returns to the Caine Performance Hall on Oct. 23, bringing together some of the brightest minds in northern Utah ..." One of those bright minds belongs to Vonda Jump, senior researcher at the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

"I got an e-mail saying I had been nominated to audition, and I auditioned in May," Jump said. "A few weeks later, was notified I had been selected. It's exciting and a little daunting."

The Office of Research and Graduate Studies brought TEDx to USU in 2012 with the hope that the conference would help underline the university as a thought-provoking venue where challenging thinkers share insight with the community. TEDxUSU is meant to push attendees and online viewers to think outside of their comfort zone by engaging them in new and different subjects.

"At the audition, I talked about what I would talk about," Jump said. "Right now, I'm working on having a talk that makes sense in seven minutes.

"My topic is how babies' brains develop through interactions with their caregivers. When I wrote it out,

it was 14 minutes. Now, I have to decide what are the important pieces. It has to be entertaining and hold people's attention, but there's a lot of information to get across. I'm painfully thinking about what needs to be cut and what doesn't need to be said."

But, she said, fitting everything into seven minutes also means there's less to memorize, because she won't be allowed to have notes.

"Seven minutes isn't much time," Jump said. "The idea is that if the topic might be a topic they'll share, it has to be short."

This year's TEDxUSU event will include two speaking sessions held in the Caine Performance Hall, separated by an extended intermission in the Kent Concert Hall atrium. The intermission will include food and interactive exhibits related to the talks.

Tickets will be available this year through a lottery process, beginning Sept. 21. Those who wish to attend must sign up for the lottery before Oct. 5. This process is meant to streamline and simplify the ticket purchasing process. For more information on the rest of the speakers, or on purchasing tickets, visit tedx.usu.edu.

"The process of working with the TEDx people has been amazing," Jump said. "They have great ideas. They are encouraging and positive and just make it sort of fun.

"Their job is to make people see the human side of you. The idea is to get the people in the audience to connect with you even before the TEDx event so they're already invested and want to be a part of it."

Jump said she has to choose three 'campus casual' outfits for the event—one she wants to wear, and two back-ups.

"My daughter and my husband are more stylistically inclined than I am, so they're going to help me," she said. "I also have a group of girlfriends I'm going to ask to help me make sense of this!"

The TEDx speakers have been meeting monthly to prepare for their presentations, and will have a dress rehearsal the day before the event.

"It's been super cool to meet the other people and hear their topics," Jump said. "I'm less nervous right now than I was, but I'm sure I'll get much more nervous!"