

## Chapter 7

# Hospital Clowns and Programs

Today, you can learn hospital clowning from many excellent teachers and practitioners. Some programs offer “mentoring” where students “shadow” experienced clowns on their hospital rounds. Major conferences teach best practices in hospital clowning. Many teachers travel nationwide.

This chapter introduces you to some hospital clowns we know who are willing to share their time and expertise with you. This is not an all-inclusive list but represents clowns from throughout the United States and Canada who we believe are setting the standards in hospital clowning. We invite you to contact them.

To learn about more hospital clown programs, see *The Hospital Clown Newsletter* by “Shobi Dobi” and *The Hospital Clown: A Closer Look*, by Shobi and Patty Wooten. (see p. 75)

The Clowns Pictured on the Back Cover (from left in each row)



Richard “Snowflake” Snowberg p. 67  
 Aviva “DR HuggaBubbe” Gorstein p. 60  
 DR Bumper “T” p. 60  
 Bob “DR Bucket” Bleiler p. 60



Desi “Dizzy” Payne p. 65  
 Carole “Pookie” Johnson p. 64  
 Cathie “DR Periwinkle” Degen p. 60  
 Denise “DR Dazzles” Black p. 60



Curt “Doctor ICU” Patty p. 68  
 Diana “Nurse Sniggles” Patty p. 68  
 Sue “Dr.KooKooHeimer”  
 Kleinwachter p. 64  
 Debbie “Cheerios” Nupp p. 66



Shobhana “Shobi Dobi” Schwebke p. 67  
 Mary “SnickerDoodle” O’Brien p. 63  
 Joan “Bunky” Barrington p. 69  
 Jane “Dr. Tickle” Abendschein p. 68



Leaders of The Bumper 'T' Caring Clowns are, from left Aviva "DR HuggaBubbe" Gorstein, Reba "DR Silly Reba" Strong, "DR Bumper 'T' " (seated); Bob "DR Bucket" Bleiler and Esther "DR CurlyBubbe" Gushner (Alex Linton photo antonimages@aol.com)

## The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns (NJ & PA)

The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns, a 501c3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Barrington, New Jersey, near Philadelphia, trained 50 hospital clowns last year for 10 hospitals in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

They currently are working with the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor and others to raise the bar on acceptable standards for hospital clowns and to develop a national certification procedure for hospital caring clowns.



Bumper "T" Clown  
Cathie "DR  
Periwinkle" Degen  
clowns at Bryn  
Mawr (PA)  
Hospital

***Shadowing is important***  
*"Shadowing is a very important part of our training program," says "DR Bumper 'T'."*

*"It takes a special approach to work in a hospital and to truly understand how to zero in on a patient's spirit and not be overwhelmed by the sights, sounds and smells of the hospital environment.*

*"We make the most of the moment one smile at a time. This is something that cannot be learned through a lecture or by reading a book but by experiencing it."*



Bumper "T"  
Clown Denise  
"DR Dazzles"  
Black clowns  
at Paoli (PA)  
Memorial  
Hospital

The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns PO Box 37, Barrington, NJ 08007  
1-800-280-9544 Email: Caringclowns @tbtc.org

**Hospital Clowns and Programs**



Korey "Tunkal"  
Thompson

## Clowns for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

Korey "Tunkal" Thompson  
Artistic Director of Clowns

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee  
% 3324 N. Shepard Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53211  
(414) 332-6590 ThompKM@aol.com

## Clown Connection (Cedar Rapids, Iowa)

Resource People at St. Luke's Hospital

Chris Montross & Kay Mineck

Pastoral Care Department St. Luke's Hospital

1026 A. Avenue N.E. Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402

(319) 369-8082 Chris's email: americlown@mcleodusa.net

## Clowns Doing Rounds (State College, PA)

Specially trained hospital clowns from The Happy Valley Alley of the World Clown Association regularly visit Centre Community Hospital in State College, PA in a program the Alley organized called "Clowns Doing Rounds."

Program Director is Betty "Dr. I See You" Hodgson, the Alley's "Vice President of Medicinal Giggles."

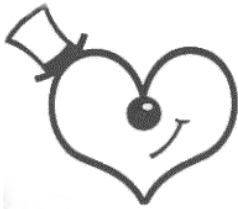
The hospital clowns work through the office of the Hospital Volunteer Coordinator. Specialized hospital clown training is required including shadowing. (Three of the hospital clowns have trained at Clown Camp @ University of Wisconsin, La Crosse.)



Peggy "Sunflower" Cole (right) uses her smiley stethoscope to check Betty "Dr. I See You" Hodgson

Betty "Dr. I See You" Hodgson  
449 Sinking Creek Rd.  
Spring Mills, PA 16875  
(814) 422-8780  
hxz@psu.edu

## Clowns on Rounds, Inc. (Albany, NY)



©Clowns on Rounds, Inc.

Clowns on Rounds, Inc.  
PO Box 6364  
Albany, NY 12206  
(518) 861-0128  
Email:  
eperson@capital.net  
Web Site: <http://www.clownsonrounds.co>

Clowns on Rounds, Inc. provides professional entertainers dressed as clown doctors and nurses to hospitals and nursing homes in New York State's Capital District.

Funding for this not for profit corporation comes from charitable foundations, corporations and private donations.

The purpose of Clowns on Rounds is:

*"to encourage in hospitalized patients, a positive attitude toward their illness and through humor, to help alleviate the fears, anxieties and stress experienced by patients, their families, friends and caregivers."*

Executive Director is Elaine Per-son. Program Director is Loretta DeAngelus.

## Loretta DeAngelus aka "Dr. Gigglebritches"



Loretta DeAngelus  
"Dr. Gigglebritches"  
1063 Valerie Drive  
Niskayuna, NY  
12309  
(518) 272-9197  
Email:  
[DrGbrtchs1@aol.com](mailto:DrGbrtchs1@aol.com)

Loretta DeAngelus has been a professional and volunteer clown for over 20 years. Loretta's nursing background and her awareness that laughter is the best medicine gave rise to "Dr. Gigglebritches" 10 years ago.

She currently works two days a week as Dr. Gigglebritches at Ellis Hospital and Sunnyview Rehabilitation Center in Schenectady, New York.

Recently, she began a special pilot program for the children in the Albany Medical Center Pediatric Oncology Clinic.

She has been program director for Clowns on Rounds, Inc. since 1998. In 2000, she was named Clown of the Year by Clowns of America International.

In March 2003, she received the "State of New York Women Pioneering the Future Award."

## Hospital Clowns and Programs

## Comedy Connection (Clearwater, Florida)

The Comedy Connection started providing Caring Clowns & Comedy Carts for patients, families and staff in 1988.

Morton Plant Mease Healthcare are JCAHO accredited hospitals (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations). They have over 100 hospital volunteers and the clowns are required to take a 10 week training program prior to making rounds.

The Comedy Carts are in operation from noon to 4 p.m. on weekdays and visitors are welcome to join on rounds!

The Comedy Connection is always open for visitors or tours with volunteers.

The Comedy Connection  
Morton Plant Hospital  
300 Pinellas St.  
Clearwater, FL 33757  
(727) 462-7841

## The Fun E Bone Repair Unit (Boise, Idaho)



Mary "SnickerDoodle"  
O'Brien, Coordinator,  
Fun E Bone Repair Unit  
3873 South Gideon Place  
Meridian Idaho 83642  
(208) 884-0682  
Email: snicker\_d00dle@  
mindspring.com  
Note: the 0's are zeroes

"The Fun E Bone Repair Unit trains, supports, and empowers clowns to serve in various health care related settings," says Coordinator Mary "SnickerDoodle" O'Brien.

As of 2003, 136 people had gone through the unit's annual training program.

"Whether clowning for hospital or hospice patients, seniors, children with special needs, families or staff, Fun E Bone clowns adhere to established 'best practice' guidelines to provide the most ethical and compassionate clowning possible."

Successful weekly programs are in place at Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise; St. Luke's Regional Medical Center in Boise and Meridian, and Mountain States Tumor Institute in Boise.

Giveaways and stickers are provided by grants written to auxiliary organizations. A new weekend program, "Fun E.U." will cover highpoints of their 30-hour training.

*"I encourage new clowns to find a mentor—someone who has clowning successfully for a number of years," says Mary. "My first two mentors were online, and I wouldn't have had the courage to follow my dream if Shobi Dobi and Beatrice Buttons hadn't been there with support, ideas and encouragement."*



Carole Johnson  
1602 Locust Way  
Lynnwood WA  
98036-9017  
(425) 481-7143 Email:  
clownjuglr@aol.com

## Carole Johnson aka "Pookie"

Carole "Pookie" Johnson is a nationally known Caring Clown and Instructor.

She clowns at nursing homes and at Stevens Hospital (Lynnwood, WA), and makes weekly rounds of the outpatient clinics of Seattle Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center.

She has been appearing as "Pookie" since 1990. She also specializes in clowning for preschool audiences and for the elderly.

She is a sought after teacher at national conferences who teaches Introduction to Caring Clowning, Props and Routines for Caring Clowns, and Developing the Caring Clown. She also offers one-day Caring Clown Intensives.



## Carole Kay aka "Blossom"

This active Canadian clown has performed extensively. Contact: Carole Kay

Box 363 Bradford, Ontario  
Canada L3Z 2A9 (905) 775-0088  
Email: blossomb-b-@on.aibn.com  
Website: <http://www.clownb-b.to/>



## Susie Kleinwachter aka "Dr. KooKooHeimer"

Also known as "Pancakes," this award winning clown, storyteller, and public speaker has taught throughout the US, UK and Canada and recently led a "Health and Humor" workshop in Monterrey, Mexico entitled "Projecto Risa." She is current Membership Director of AATH (Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor). She sells many items for hospital/nursing home clowning. See p. 80.

Susie "Pancakes" Kleinwachter PO Box 700 Warrenville, IL 60555  
(630) 393-7714 Email: FunE98@aol.com Website: KleinTime.com

## **Kettering Medical Center Network (Ohio) “Anything But Serious” Hospital Clown Troupe**



Valerie “Pennies” Haley and  
James “Spots” Haley

Valerie Haley  
2110 Leiter Rd.  
Miamisburg, OH 45342  
(937) 384-4884  
Email: Valerie.Haley@  
kmcnetwork.org

This volunteer clown troupe was the brainchild of Valerie Parker-Haley, an employee of the Kettering Medical Center.

The group originated in the winter of 1999 and currently has more than 45 active clowns. Their mission is to bring encouragement, smiles, and a little bit of cheer to those who need it most.

The clowns all are required to go through the hospital’s volunteer department and to attend monthly meetings and ongoing training.

This award-winning troupe is supported by the Kettering Medical Center Network but also accepts donations to help offset supply costs.

The clowns visit nursing homes, hospice, local charities, as well as area hospitals.



Desirae Payne  
2616 Clearview St.  
Ottumwa IA 52501  
Email: Balloonfactory  
@rew2000.com

## **Ottumwa Regional Health Center (Iowa) Desi Payne aka “Dizzy”**

Desi Payne, a professional clown since 1995, has been involved with drama and clowning for more than 20 years. She also has worked as a children’s pastor.

As “Dizzy the Clown,” she brings “Merry Heart Medicine” every week to the Ottumwa Regional Health Center. (ORCH) She is sponsored by the Ottumwa Regional Health Foundation.

Her humor therapy includes singing, telling stories, blowing bubbles, juggling, and using puppets. Her clown mentor, Chuck Rinkel, pioneered clown/humor therapy at ORCH in 1991 as “Dr. Bugg.”



Debbie Nupp  
Coordinator  
Therapeutic Humor  
Program  
Rochester General  
Hospital  
1425 Portland Avenue  
Rochester, NY 14621  
(585) 922-3596  
Email: deb.nupp@  
viahealth.org

***Coming Soon:***

Debbie plans to publish how to make towels in a patient's room into dogs, swans, and more that you leave with the patient.

## Therapeutic Humor Program Rochester General Hospital (New York)

Debbie Nupp, LPN, has been a nurse for 25 years, most recently working in the operating room and pediatric unit.

After attending an AATH conference (Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor), she was inspired to create a humor program in her own hospital, Rochester General Hospital in Rochester, NY.

Launched in 1999 with funding from the Rochester General Hospital Foundation, today the award winning therapeutic humor program has four components:

- Clown Rounds by the Rx Laughter Caring Clown Unit. Since 1999, 31 volunteer clowns have been specially trained for clown rounds.
- A Humor TV channel that shows classic comedies on the hospital closed circuit television 24 hours a day.
- A Humor Library
- Humor Education. "Clownology" courses for new clowns are offered through the year as are classes for staff on the value of humor.

Last year, the Rx Laughter Caring Clown Unit won the New York State Volunteer Award. At the hospital, Debbie works as both a nurse and as coordinator of the therapeutic humor program. She clowns as "Cheerios" the clown.



## Bud Salloum aka "Buddy the Clown"

Co-Founder  
Edmonton, Canada Caring Clowns  
12407-135 Street Edmonton  
Alberta, Canada T5L 1X8  
(780) 455-6049





Shobhana Schwebke  
aka Shobi Dobi  
P.O. Box 8957  
Emeryville, CA  
94662  
(510) 420-1511  
Shobidobi@aol.com

## Shobhana Schwebke aka "Shobi Dobi"

Shobhana Schwebke, M.A., aka "Shobi Dobi," is a world renowned caring clown, author, teacher, and artist. She is the editor and publisher of *The Hospital Clown Newsletter*, an international newsletter published since 1995. She is the co-author, with Patty Wooten, of *The Hospital Clown: A Closer Look*. (see page 75).

Shobi has worked as a hospital clown at Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, California and in hospitals, clinics and orphanages in Guatemala, India, China and Russia.

She leads hospital clown workshops internationally and also gives laughter workshops.



## The Smile Team of Hospice of the Florida Suncoast

Joye "TING" Swisher,  
300 East Bay Drive Largo, FL 33774  
Joyeswisher@thehospice.org,  
(727) 586-4432



Dr. Richard  
Snowberg  
snowberg.rich@  
uwlax.edu  
(608) 785-8053  
http://  
perth.uwlax.edu/

## Dr. Richard Snowberg aka "Snowflake Junior"

Dr. Richard Snowberg is an internationally renowned clown and educator who was inducted into the International Clown Hall of Fame in 1999.

For the past 23 years, he has directed Clown Camp® which he founded at the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse. An emeriti faculty member at the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse, he has written five books on clowning including the classic *Caring Clowns: How Humor, Smiles and Laughter Overcome Pain, Suffering and Loneliness* (see p. 75).

He has twice served as President of the World Clown Association, most recently in 2002. He teaches, clowns and travels throughout the world.

## Clown Docs of St. Louis Children's Hospital

Jane Abendschein started the Clown Docs program at St. Louis Children's Hospital in 1999. She is the director for the program that supplies clowns in the clinics and at bedsides. Her Clown Doc name is Dr. Tickle.

Other regular members of the Clown Docs are Dana Abendschein aka "Professor Dude," Curt Patty aka "Doctor ICU" and Diana Patty aka "Nurse Squiggles."

Dana Abendschein PhD, is a professor at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, where he does vascular research and teaches several classes — including the first credit course on "The Medicine of Laughter" offered at any medical school in the country.



St. Louis Clown Docs are (from left) Jane "Dr. Tickle" Abendschein, Diana "Nurse Squiggles" Patty, Debbi "Bubbles the Scrub Nurse" Schwarz (seated) Curt "Doctor ICU" Patty and Dana "Professor Dude" Abendschein.

Dana and Jane teach all aspects of clowning including makeup, character development, and the use of clowning in hospitals and prisons.

To contact them or to learn about the Clown Docs program at St. Louis Children's Hospital, contact Jane Abendschein, 1401 Norman Place, Warson Woods, MO 63122, (314) 822-5315, [libertyandbelle@aol.com](mailto:libertyandbelle@aol.com)

Curt and Diana Patty also teach all aspects of clowning. Contact them at P.O. Box 19722 St. Louis MO 63144, 314-962-3984

Email: [clowngadgetstore@juno.com](mailto:clowngadgetstore@juno.com)

Website: [www.clowngadgetstore.com](http://www.clowngadgetstore.com)

## Hospital Clowns and Programs



Clockwise from top left:  
Lucia "Nuula" Cino; Camilla  
"Posy" Gryski, Kate "Turtle"  
Keenan, Kathleen "Le  
Roux" Doko, Joan "Bunky"  
Barrington

Contact: Joan Barrington  
Coordinator, Therapeutic  
Clown Program, The Hospital  
for Sick Children  
Department of Child Life  
555 University Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1X8  
(416) 813-6629  
joan.barrington@sickkids.ca

## The Therapeutic Clown Program of The Hospital for Sick Children

"In the late 80's I was blessed with a dream and over the years, with the help of many dear friends, this dream has come to fruition," recalls Joan "Bunky" Barrington. "In 1993 Karen Ridd, aka Robo (the founder of the first Canadian Therapeutic Clown Program) together with myself established the first Therapeutic Clown Program in Ontario at The Hospital for Sick Children. Since its inception, the program has grown to five therapeutic clowns gently working their magic on five inpatient floors, two full days a week.

"Our therapeutic clowns are seasoned professionals with extensive backgrounds in areas such as theatre, clown, voice and movement, child development, holistic education and the expressive arts. The therapeutic clown truly comes from the 'inside out' and in each character we honour their unique spirit and magical self.

"I view love, warmth and a full expression of joy and wonderment as major components to the healing process and of being an effective and compassionate therapeutic clown.

"In therapeutic clowning there exists the three 'Cs'; *communication* which builds the trust, *connection* which opens the doors to healing and *compassion* that feeds the spirit. Through the relationship and intimacy, we can joyfully pass the control over to them and they will lead us. To move forward in life, hope is essential. The human spirit is powerful and these children have the capacity to live life to the fullest right up to the end. We are partners in the play, as we are partners in this life."

## University Initiatives

Recent developments at two major universities are reinforcing the potential and value of therapeutic clowning in healing.

In one development, the first credit course in clowning is now being offered at a leading medical school—The Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

In another development, an innovative initiative is underway at a major land-grant university, Penn State University, to explore applications of all the arts to health and healing issues.

### Arts and Health Outreach Initiative (AHOI) The Pennsylvania State University

This innovative, interdisciplinary initiative at The Pennsylvania State University, a leading land-grant university, is in the second year of a three year pilot project.

AHOI links the arts with a wide array of academic disciplines and external resources connected to personal and public health concerns. This allows AHOI to create coalitions that explore applications of the arts to personal health and healing, as well as to critical public health issues.

The initiative is supported by four principal Penn State partners—the Colleges of Arts and Architecture, Health and Human Development, and Medicine, and Penn State Outreach and Cooperative Extension.

AHOI embraces a broad definition of health, including not only personal health and healing, but also holistic community life and well-being.

Ermyrn F. King, Coordinator



For more about the programs, conferences, exhibitions and other projects presented by

AHOI, contact:

Arts and Health Outreach  
Initiative (AHOI)

Ermyrn F. King, Coordinator

The Pennsylvania State  
University

3-D Keller Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 865-8230

Email: [efk103@psu.edu](mailto:efk103@psu.edu)

*“To our knowledge, no other university has brought together as many diverse partners for the purpose of demonstrating and documenting the interrelationships between the arts and health.*

*“What universities have to offer is integration of teaching, research and service (and the outreach component of these core missions) in the arts and health.”*

Ermyrn King, Coordinator,  
Arts and Health Outreach Initiative  
The Pennsylvania State University

## Washington University School of Medicine offers course on "The Medicine of Laughter"

The Washington University School of Medicine is the first U.S. medical school to offer a credit course in clowning.

The credit selective course called "The Medicine of Laughter" has been offered for first year medical students since 2000. In the course, the medical students read and discuss literature describing the physiologic and psychological benefits of humor, and discuss how humor can play a positive role in the doctor/patient relationship.

The students also shadow the Clown Docs at St. Louis Children's Hospital to observe the effects of humor in the hospital setting. Students that choose to do so may participate in a "super-selective", in which they develop their own clown character.

Notes Professor Dana Abendschein, (*right*), who teaches the course, "Our first goal is to not make students clowns, but to allow them to learn how to access humor to help themselves and their future patients."



For details on teaching of humor in medical school contact Dana Abendschein, Ph.D., Washington University School of Medicine, 660 South Euclid Box 8086, St. Louis, MO 63110, (314) 362-8925, dabendsc@im.wustl.edu

## Hospital Clown Presenters

This list is not inclusive of every fine presenter. We offer it as a starting reference if you are seeking persons with extensive hospital clown experience, "best practice" knowledge and teaching experience.

Dana Abendschein p. 68.	Mary O'Brien p. 63.
Jane Abendschein p. 68.	Curt Patty p. 68.
Joe Barney (see below)	Diana Patty p. 68.
Joan Barrington p. 69.	Desirae Payne p. 65.
The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns p. 60.	Shobhana Schwebke p. 67.
Loretta DeAngelus p. 62.	Richard Snowberg p. 67.
Carole Johnson p. 64.	Anita Thies p. 83.
Susie Kleinwachter p. 64.	Korey Thompson p. 61.
Tammy Miller p. 82.	Janet Tucker p. 80.
Debbie Nupp p. 66.	Patty Wooten p. 9 & 76.

Joe Barney aka "Doc Geezer" (picture next page)  
formerly clowned at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital  
Contact him at: 129 Nutmeg Rd., Bridgeport, CT 06610 (203) 365-0571  
Email: bamboozele@aol.com  
Website: www.centerringproductions.com

## Hospital Clown Presenters