

WEEBLE WORDS

Volume 2, Issue 3, May 2008



A SPECIAL VISIT by Santa Dave Jordan

We Santas are called upon to deal with a variety of, sometimes difficult, situations as we put on the “Big Red Suit” which represents the spirit of Love, Hope, & Joy. This past season I experienced my first real test in dealing with children who took a real delight in finding ways to challenge Santa. I was asked by a friend of mine if I would consider a visit to a “school/home” in Virginia for children that had been sent there by the court system. My friend felt this Santa visit would be beneficial in helping to build the self esteem and trust levels with the young people. Most of these kids, ranged in age from 6-18, were victims of mental, physical, and sexual abuse as well as parental neglect and abandonment. A number of the older kids were juvenile offenders and were “visiting” the school for a second and third time for offenses ranging from vehicle theft to armed assault. Santa had never visited these children at the school and most had not even had a visit at their home so he had never been very important in their lives. The real challenge here was one of being able to build some trust with these young people who had no reason to trust any adult... not even Santa Claus.



We need help reaching our children of military families. Please call Santa-America if you can help!

Santa's visit to children come from referrals by the medical community and hospice as well as from special needs educators and social workers.

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The visit was supervised by the complete staff..doctors, nurses, social workers, and other staff to include two of the biggest male attendants I had ever seen in my life. These guys were huge! When I saw my “helpers” I thought to myself... what have I gotten myself into?! I'd like to say that I felt secure about the whole situation but, in all honesty, I was wondering if this might be a repeat of some situations that I had experienced many years before, and not as Santa Claus! The visits were broken down by age group and structured in such a way as to minimize the chaos. The first group consisted of the younger children through age eight or nine and the “trust and love” factor was still pretty apparent so it was without incident. The next three groups consisted of the older kids up to eighteen years old and was an entirely different experience. These kids did their best to “shock and awe” Santa and keep me off balance.

There were many memorable stories but the one that really sticks out in my mind concerned a pretty young lady of sixteen years of age. This child had suffered major abuse in her short life and didn't have a very good feeling (with good reason) about much of anything in her life. I anticipated that this was going to be a difficult and one sided exchange but she surprised me

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PLANT SEEDS...WATCH THEM GROW

Santa Ernest

photo by Elizabeth
McGonagle Graham



Santa Ernest has lilies blooming in his garden! I am definitely in “Summer Santa” dress. Last week Bayside Academy graduated eight senior Teen Elves. I could not have been prouder of these young men and women... America is in good hands. They are now “Elf Alumni,” off to college and taking their elf experience with them to continue serving children with special needs. Thus Santa plants seeds and watches them grow around the USA and the world! Please consider calling Elf Cathy and ask her to help you start a Teen Elf program in your area school.

Planting seeds this time of the year includes both your garden AND with potential donors and supporters in your community.

Last year, we expanded our participation scope to include October “Breast Cancer Awareness” events. Our challenge continues to be keeping Santa as the symbol of Love, Hope and Joy in people’s consciousness 12 months a year. Clearly, our year around visits to children accomplishes this. We all need to follow-up with our hospital and hospice affiliations to remind them (every month) that Santa stands ready to serve. **DO NOT WAIT TO BE CALLED!** Believe me, you will not be considered a pest and you will find that, quite often, there have been staffing changes and the new team does not know we exist!! I like **Santa Tim Mack’s** approach. He makes it a point to visit his Montana hospital every two weeks or so when he is in town. He is now considered a part of the staff!!

Elf Cathy, Elf Nita and I are in motion in early June connecting with Santas and meeting with key supporters like the **Jewelers for Children**. Our many support programs are underway and we must have higher levels of predictable donor support to continue our mission. Please work to establish a local base of supporters for Santa America with YOU as the central focus! It is critical for every Santa to commit to raise at least \$3000 locally in 2008 even as our national staff works to raise \$300,000 nationally...we need both every year to continue to support our mission around the world. It’s “Elf before Self” as we bring Love, Hope and Joy to our very special children. Plant some seeds and watch 'em grow!

HELP THE ELF!-ELF NITA

Well just about the time we think “Spring” has sprung, here comes “Summer”, and boy has it come down here along the Gulf Coast. But that’s as it should be, even the humidity! I hope this note finds you all well. Things are progressing with our goal of completing all your folders. I can’t thank those of you enough, who have been “Johnny on the spot” by getting everything to me that I’ve asked of you. I’ve also had a great time talking with some of you as well as your Hospice Coordinators. Often they are not sure just how “Santa” can be of benefit to their 365 day a year organization. If that’s your case or if you think a phone call from the “Southern” North Pole can promote a more clear understanding of your service to children, please let me know. I’ll be happy to call and speak with them. (I’m an “old” cheerleader from high school and college; I’d love to cheer for You. Just don’t ask me to do any cartwheels or jump too high!!!)



I’m just about at the end of my second round of emails to those of you who have “empty” folders. In some cases I’m sure email addresses have changed, so my last attempt will be a phone call to check for new email addresses and your continued interest in Santa-America.

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BEHIND THE RED SUIT

Santa Dave Jordan

Santa, tell us a little bit about yourself?

I'm Santa Dave Jordan. I am sixty four years old and have been "playing at" Santa for over eleven years. I became a "real" Santa a little over a year ago. I served in the US Army as a Special Forces medic including three Vietnam tours. My studies were in Metallurgical Engineering and Business at Ohio State University. I have spent my entire career in industrial sales, marketing, management and consulting. (Not a lot of call to wear red in these areas!)

How did you decide to become Santa?

I've always loved "The Big Guy." My children Sean (31) and Amy (28) always insisted Daddy take them to visit Santa at the mall. As much as I treasured that experience, I never considered becoming "The Man." Years after the kids had moved on, the love of my life, Nona suggested we share a bit of Christmas Joy. Nona had challenges that first year to even get me into a red sweatshirt and Santa hat! Naturally, I gave in and by doing so an evolutionary process started. Little by little it happened, a change was occurring as new pieces of "gear" were added and we thought of new ways we could share the Christmas Spirit. The "Inner Child" in both of us was pulling out all the stops. The magic smiles of the children of all ages and the laughter and love that they showed towards Santa (not towards Dave Jordan) hooked me... THE RIDE WAS ON!

How did you find Santa-America and when did you join?

After the 2006 season I was searching for a way to keep the feeling alive. I picked up a copy of *The Wall Street Journal* and there was an article on AORBS. I learned of the Red Suit Roundtable (RSRT) in Atlanta and decided to attend. At the RSRT, I met the finest group of loving, caring men and women I had ever encountered. Friendships started that night that will last the rest of my life. I was also introduced to an organization that makes me feel that perhaps there is still time for this old industrial salesman to help change the world for the better... through Santa-America. As **Santa Ernest Berger** and **Elf Cathy Barnette** explained the Santa-America mission, I was hooked. Little did I know how important Santa America would become to Nona and me.

At dinner sitting next to me was another individual who would play a pivotal role in my Santa development. **Santa Richard Farhat** of Marietta, GA talked with me at length about Santa-America and spoke glowingly of the mission of bringing "Love, Hope & Joy" to children and families. I saw in Santa Richard the gentleness, love and caring that I am certain comes through to the children and families he works with. I really want to be like Santa Richard when I grow up! We are all very fortunate to know him. Santa Richard told me that if I was serious about working with Santa America that he had two gifts for me... a red Elf cap (my first piece of non-Christmas RED apparel and the only red thing I had for the remainder of the weekend) and a wonderful book entitled "Santa's Gift." I had to promise him I would do what I could. I am, and will continue keeping that promise to a truly wonderful Santa. What a guy, a combination of Marine and Santa."SEMPER FI" Richard.

This past Christmas season was a whirlwind of activity for a "newbie" like me. Mrs. Claus and I had a great time bringing the Spirit of Santa to the children and dependents of our deployed South Carolina National Guard soldiers, doing a "Breakfast with Santa for active duty military families through the USO, and a giant troop sendoff to home for the holidays at the Charlotte, NC airport (USO sponsored). These troops were in US Army and USMC basic training facilities in the Carolinas.



Santa Dave Jordan
aka Jeep Santa and
Mrs. Nona Claus.

Poor old Santa and Mrs. Claus didn't make any money last year but we sure got rich in our hearts.

---Santa Dave

SA AWARDED GRANT FROM MDRT FOUNDATION

Thomas Phillip Webb, ChFC, AEP, from Daphne, AL secured a \$2,500 grant from the MDRT Foundation on behalf of Santa-America. Webb, of Webb Financial Group Inc and a 16-year MDRT member is an active supporter of Santa-America and nominated and endorsed the grant application. The grant will support specialized training initiatives and gifts for our children in hospice care, suffering from post-traumatic stress, or with chronic pediatric illness. **Santa Ernest Berger** stated “We are proud to be granted this support and look forward to building a lasting relationship with MDRT Foundation to serve our special children.”



The MDRT Foundation was created in 1959 to provide MDRT members with a means to give back to their communities. Since its inception, the Foundation has donated \$20.4 million in 67 countries around the world and in all 50 U.S. states. The MDRT Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Million Dollar Round Table, the Premier Association of Financial Professionals. MDRT is an international, independent association of more than 35,000, or less than 1 percent, of the world’s best life insurance and financial services professionals from 476 companies and 76 nations and territories.

A SPECIAL VISIT BY SANTA DAVE JORDAN (CONT.)

by asking me the first question in a volume that the whole room could hear. This question concerned the detailed sexual preference of Santa’s female reindeer and was asked to see what my response would be. Well, I thought the staff was going to go ballistic (as she had hoped) and the other kids all laughed and grinned with anticipation of my answer. (HA, we got you now Santa!!!) I had asked for divine intervention prior to going into this visit and if there was ever a time it was answered then this was it (THANK YOU LORD!!!). I was totally “unshocked” and calmly dealt with the question and we then moved on to a more conventional line of questions that I controlled. The atmosphere in the room changed, both with the kids and the staff. The young lady and I had a great visit. I even got a big hug and a peck on my cheek at the end with a “thank you Santa.” The remaining kids all were really cool with me (probably took pity on me). (NOTE: Any Santa wanting to know how I answered should call me or E-mail me and we can discuss). I told this young lady, and each individual child to try to always remember, even when they are going through the rough times, that they are loved by Santa. This statement was met with mixed reactions but most smiled, gave Santa a hug (even the big kids) and thanked me for coming to see them. The single most common wish each had expressed was a desire to go home for Christmas. The four hour drive back home was tough as I tried to see the road through my tears as I kept thinking of these beautiful children that had been thrown away by their parents and society.

The question that all have asked ourselves at some point in our being Santa is: “Did this Santa visit do any good with these children?” I don’t know the answer to that question and I guess I never will, but what I do know, is that we have all been given a unique opportunity to play a part in children of all ages lives through our portrayal of Santa Claus. Mrs. Claus and I always turn this over before we ever make an entrance and then we don’t worry about it... it’s out of our hands and in HIS! The staff was delighted (after they recovered from THE question) with the reaction of the young people to Santa’s visit and my friend said that the pictures were hung in the classrooms and “Santa talk” continued long after “SANTA HAD LEFT THE BUILDING!”

LOVE, HOPE, & JOY WRAPPED IN A WARM SANTA HUG will always have a positive effect no matter how “challenging” the situation.

Please send in your stories and pictures of your special visits. We need to refresh our photos to better represent the diversity of our Santas and our coverage throughout the country.

Santa-America is member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO).

ELF EXPERIENCE UPDATES

SANTA-AMERICA RECEIVES CREATIVE ASSISTANCE FROM SPRING HILL COLLEGE STUDENTS

Two Spring Hill College students have chosen to help Santa America redesign its website for their class project. Anne Couvillon and Joelle Bernhardt (pictured L-R) are senior integrated communication majors currently taking a case studies class. Students were asked to partner with a local organization in need of some assistance in order to achieve hands-on public relations and marketing experience.



“We immediately chose Santa America,” Bernhardt said. “It stood out as an organization that showed a lot of community involvement and we knew we would feel good about helping.” Couvillon and Bernhardt plan to re-design the website in order to make it more appealing and user friendly both for its visitors and for its volunteers. The pair plans to use the skills they have learned in their classes to accomplish the goals that they and Santa America set.

“Santa America’s volunteers are so passionate about what they do,” Couvillon said. “We want this theme of love, hope and joy to be revealed through the website.”

ELF-TIVITIES



Pictured left, Santa says Good Luck to 2008 Bayside Elf-Alums.

At Right, Elf Schaefer, Elf Jessie and Elf Emma support the Daphne Community Day.



MANY THANKS TO OUR ELVES AT ALONSO HIGH SCHOOL (Tampa, FL)! The National Honor Society elves raised nearly \$5,000 to support our special children and their families!

GET MORE ELVES UNDERWAY

Santa, we want you to develop a teen elf program in your community. It's an excellent way to educate the community on our special work and build a network of support for our special children and their families. Worried about how it works? **Elf Judy Davenport** has helped us further the program to include the adult Elf. The adult Elf serves as a liaison between the school and Santa. This is an excellent way for adults to participate in our special work. The experience is rewarding for the community, the school, the student, the Santa but most importantly to our special child. Younger children may be utilized on fun, cameo type appearances. To learn more on building a program, contact Elf Cathy at info@santa-america.org.

SANTA TO DO'S

Elf Nita still needs your paperwork!

Submit your pictures and stories! We'll upload to the website.

Send the name and contact information of a local paper and reporter. We'll send them a note about your involvement with Santa-America.

Contact Santa-America for your e-copy of the Santa-America Volunteer Sleigh Kit.

Identify a venue for a Santa-America fundraiser. Contact Elf Cathy or Elf Nita for details.

Share with elected officials your special visits and the work of Santa-America. Elf Cathy and Elf Nita are ready to support you as needed.

Contact Elf Cathy to learn how you can team up with an area school to build an Elf Program.



May '08

ELF NITA (CONT.)

We certainly hope that is the case for everyone, but if not, we need to find that out and remove anyone who isn't really representing our organization from our Santa Map. It's very important for the integrity of Santa-America, Inc. that all of our Santa's are compliant with all hospice and Santa-America policies. I'm sure you all feel the same way too. I also know, that for some of you who have been a SA Santa for quite awhile find it a little "after the fact" to fill out an application, etc., but that's the only way we can complete all our folders so that we can present a consistent, complete presentation when we are ask by any governing agency to do so. I can attach everything I need completed from you to an email if that will make the "chore" a little easier, just let me know.



Cathy and I are headed to St. Augustine, FL, this weekend for their Palm Tree Santa meeting. (May 30th & 31st). We're really looking forward to spending time with our Santa-America guys and gals who will be there. It'll be my first time to meet a good number of you in person. I'm excited!!! Also, we're excited to share the philosophy of Santa-America with those who haven't yet made the decision to jump on board our sleigh. I'll be using more of my "cheerleading" skills this weekend, count on it. Have a great beginning to summer everyone, and keep those calls and emails coming in!!!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

May 30-June 1-Palm Tree Santa gathering in St. Augustine, FL. Contact Santa Bob Elkin for more information or visit www.palmtreesantas.com.

July 2008-Long Leaf Pine Santa Gathering. Contact Santa Jac Grimes for more information at santajac@triad.R.R.com.

March 2009- Celebrate Santa Convention. Visit www.CelebrateSanta.com for details.

Summer 2009 Santa-America Training Conference...details to follow in upcoming issue.

Gathering not listed! Contact us so we can add it to the list!

Love, Hope &
Joy
Wrapped in a
Warm Santa
Hug
for Special
Children &
their Families
365 Days A
Year!



Santa-America has grown to almost 300 dedicated Santas, Mrs. Claus and Elves in 44 states and 6 foreign countries.