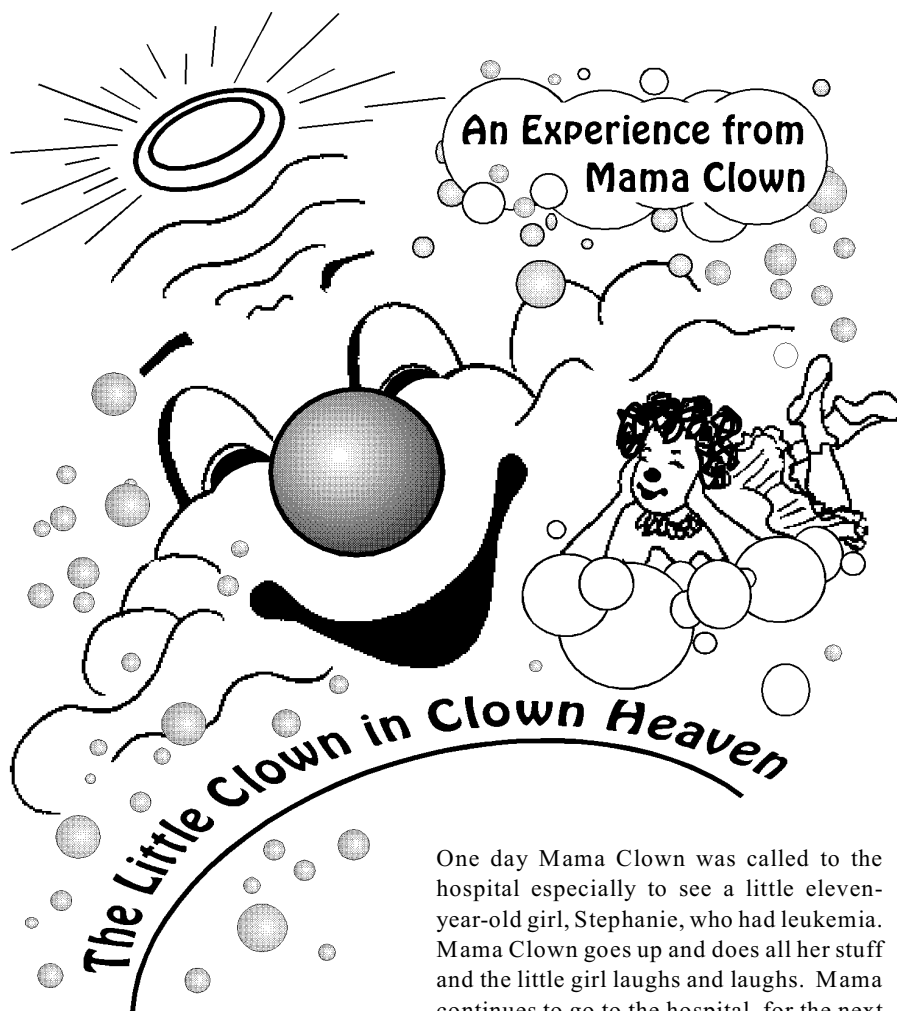


Hospital Clown Newsletter

The Gentle Art of the Caring Clown

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One day Mama Clown was called to the hospital especially to see a little eleven-year-old girl, Stephanie, who had leukemia. Mama Clown goes up and does all her stuff and the little girl laughs and laughs. Mama continues to go to the hospital, for the next few weeks, while Stephanie battles leukemia. So it was that they got to know each other.

On one visit Mama Clown was stopped in the hall by one of Stephanie's nurses. "Stephanie will not be leaving the hospital this time." Stephanie had maybe two weeks to live.

When Mama quietly enters the child's room, Stephanie looks up at her and asks very seriously, "Mama, please sit down, I want to talk to you about something."

Mama Clown sits next to her and Stephanie whispers, "What happens to people when they die?"

Well, Mama Clown is a "little girl clown" still in Kinderclown, so she answers with the enthusiasm of her character, "I don't know about regular heaven." She continues as proudly as her little clown is, "but I know clowns go to clown heaven."

The little girl's eyes got big, "What's clown heaven like?"

"Oh, it's going to be wonderful. You know that's where all the elephants go, and all the old clowns." Mama Clown begins to tell one of her big whopping stories. "We have parades every day, and cotton candy, and we are just having the best time. That is where all of us clowns go. Yeap! We've got our own special heaven and nobody can be in there, but us clowns. It's going to be just wonderful."

Stephanie looks up and asks, "Mama Clown, can I go to Clown Heaven?"

"No problem!" Mama Clown responds enthusiastically. "All you need is a clown nose. Tell them Mama sent you and they will let you in. I promise you."

So Mama tells her all about being a clown. Then she paints a red nose on her.

So every day the little girl makes sure she is ready and has a red nose.

As it was, Mama Clown had to go to a convention and was away for six days. On her return she went upstairs, just as fast as she could, to see how Stephanie was doing. She found out that Stephanie had passed on. The nurse said "The day she died, she made us paint a red nose on her -- up until the last minute her concern was whether her nose looked O.K., so she could go to clown heaven."

The parents buried Stephanie with her red nose on, because she was looking forward so, to going to Clown Heaven. Mama Clown had given her a fantasy that carried her through to the end. It was something so difficult for the family, yet this little red nose gave them something joyful to hang onto.

I have a feeling that was just the beginning for Stephanie - in Clown Heaven.

"Mama Clown" Marcela Murad has been clowning for 20 years. She has traveled all over the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico and the Caribbean teaching just about everything, from face painting to birthday parties, storytelling, balloons. Mama is best known for her face painting workshops and her face painting book is the best!

What a Gift Mama Clown Gave That Child and That Family.

From Shobi Dobi, **Editor's note** on the above article::

Some years later Mama Clown was telling this story at a clown convention. Several of those in her class got up and stomped out. Later when she asked them "Why did you leave so abruptly? Did I do something wrong?" They replied, "When the little girl asked you about heaven, you should have taken that opportunity to tell her about Jesus and her salvation!"

As hospital clowns in community hospitals we cannot take on this role. We are not there to preach our own religion. We need to be sensitive to the patient's rights to their own individual opinions and their own religion. Beside hospitals have strict rules against people coming in to proselytize, not to mention the new HIPPA Rules of privacy. (See HIPPA on this website)

It is not our place to take advantage of a patient weaken condition to push our own faith on them. What Mama Clown did in her spontaneous response was to give the child, the parents, and the staff an opportunity to experience and be with the child on her passing path. Every day the little girl would ask "Is this the day I'm going to die?" She wanted to make sure she had her red nose on when she went to clown heaven. This meant that nobody had to avoid telling her the truth and wear false smiley faces to hide the truth. They talked together and cried together. And it gave the child something joyful to hang onto. What a gift Mama Clown gave that child and that family.