

FTC Gets Some Very Special Funding

by Arne Swensen, of Scottsdale, Arizona



The Third Grade Class at Black Mountain Elementary School gives the Foundation for Therapeutic Clowning a donation. [Leave it to kids to know what's good.] Arne Swensen is in front row, Ms. Horton is standing in top row.

The Foundation for Therapeutic Clowning received a special honor from the Black Mountain Elementary School in Cave Creek, Arizona. Here I found an extraordinary group of students in a combined class of first, second and third graders. Some of the students have special needs and some are gifted. They call themselves "Horton's Who's" after their teacher, Mrs. Debbie Horton. All year long they conduct events to raise funds for their own foundation. During the last two years they raised \$2,700 for bereavement support, needy families, medical research to help cure a student's illness, grants to teachers, animal rescue and other needs in the community.



"Children need to learn to give as well as receive," says Mrs. Horton, which is the theme of the program that introduces the students to community service at an early age. "In addition, they receive a good feeling through giving." The children raise the funds and also get to choose who receives them.

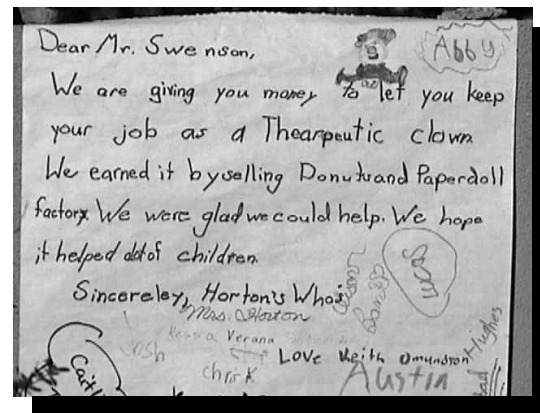
Recently, I gave the class materials to review on Therapeutic Clowning and they decided to make a contribution to provide support for

the new Foundation. They invited my hospital clown, Doctor Laffngiggel to speak to their class and receive a letter and a check from them. During our visit, I enlisted one of the children to help me with a juggling and magic routine. I also talked to them about the role of a hospital clown.

Dr. Laffngiggel treated them all to a Red Nose and we sang "It's A Small World After All." Mrs. Horton knew all the verses and the children and I belted out the chorus. After thanking them for their generous gift, I encouraged them all to grow up to be Clowns.

I met this wonderful group of children through the family of Joe Pearn, a student in the class. Last year I visited Joe's grandfather, Jack Pohle, several times in the hospital as he battled against cancer. Later the Pohle family honored me by inviting me to attend a memorial function for Mr. Pohle, as Doctor Laffngiggel. It was a very special evening.

Some people wondered about the presence of a clown. As each guest arrived, I gave them a card with Mr. Pohle's picture on it. I asked them to write a private note to him on the card. I then attached the card to a balloon. Later in the evening each person took a balloon outside where a brief ceremony was held after which we released the balloons. They flew straight toward the full moon and some in attendance gasped at the beauty of the sight. By this time, my eye makeup was running and people were hugging each other.



The Horton's Who's Presentation Letter

The Foundation for Therapeutic clowning is in the process of gaining tax exemption prior to beginning a fund raising campaign through grant applications and corporations. We are considering affiliation with a larger, more established foundation that has recognition and funding expertise, as well as the ability to provide the necessary administrative support, which can be a formidable task.

Our goal is to provide funds to support therapeutic clown programs, ambassador clown pilgrimages, university research on the effects of therapeutic clowning, and the development and maintenance of a therapeutic clown association.