

DR Happy Hart and DR Blue Eyes

a.k.a. Fran and Joe Salamone of Bridgeport, Pennsylvania



From DR Happy Hart, Fran Salamone:

I have been a volunteer all my life. Professionally, I worked in banking for 38 years and served as a vice president of Royal Bank in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Joe was a plumber and became disabled 23 years ago after suffering a very serious stroke. In spite of this handicap, Joe had been a hospital volunteer for a number of years. A sudden change in hospital policy ascertained that, due to liability concerns, physically disabled volunteers were asked to leave. Joe was heart broken and severely depressed.

I was already trained as a RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) clown, but I found that entertaining with skits, magic tricks, balloons and face painting was not as satisfying as I had hoped it would be. Nine months ago, I heard about the Bumper "T" Caring Clown program and decided to take their training class. Wow! Now this is what I had in mind.

As a 13- year survivor of Breast Cancer, I REALLY appreciated the Bumper "T" approach. I understood the value of visiting the *Person* and not the *Disease*. When I was taught about making that human connection, I knew that I had found my niche.

I would come home from class and share my excitement with Joe. We both began to realize that although Joe's body was compromised, his sense of humor, fun and compassion were still very much intact. We were hopeful that there would be a place for Joe as a Bumper "T" Caring Clown.

Boy! Was there ever a place for Joe! He became *DR Blue Eyes*.

Laurie Watson, the Director of Volunteers at Lankenau Hospital welcomed Joe with open arms. What an inspiration he would prove to be for all for those patients and family members who were experiencing a difficult time. My Joe is a clown hero! Everyone loves seeing him give out stickers and smiles as he meanders the hospital corridors seated in his electric scooter. By the way, that depression he had?--gone!

We volunteer in 2 hospitals on a regular basis. Whenever I take out the make-up kit and turn Joe into *DR Blue Eyes*, and he gazes up at me with those twinkling blue eyes, I realize that we are truly blessed that we found The Bumper "T" Caring Clowns.

From DR Blue Eyes, Joe Salamone:

I would just like to add that every day that I bring *DR Blue Eyes* to the hospital is better than the last. Everybody thanks me—but I know that I get more out of this than anyone. The fact that I can touch people—from my scooter—just blows me away! When we leave the hospital, I feel so happy that I think my head will hit the ceiling, and I can't wait until the next time we come to volunteer!

FASALAMONE@aol.com

Following are routine favorites from:

DRS Band-aids and Stitches.

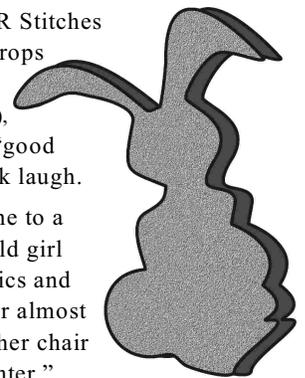
DR Band-aids has a small "cannister style" spice jar with a happy face painted on the lid. "I call it my jar of 'magical' pixie dust. I ask, 'Have you ever seen magical pixie dust?' The answer is always 'No, because it's invisible.' It needs to stay in a well-closed jar because if it is in the air too long it loses its power. At this time I open the lid and take a pinch of 'nothing' Then I tell them, 'The power of magical pixie dust will make you laugh, because it will tickle your insides if it lands on you. May I throw some on you? Yes? Are you sure? Ah, yes You didn't change your mind. Well, OK.' I throw the pixie dust and get really excited. 'Is it working yet, look! Oh, Look! A smile!' I have varied it slightly with boys. I say they will giggle like a girl and sometimes they do!"

One of DR Stitches favorite props is a Grey Hare (hair), which is "good for a quick laugh.

"I gave one to a 10-year-old girl in pediatrics and the mother almost fell from her chair with laughter."

You just "palm it" and reach over to the back of the head and "Oh wow, It's a Gray Hare!"

Four dozen for \$8.00 Available from www.BubbaSikes.com



DR Stitches and DR Bandaides

a.k.a. Al Beahm and Pat Silfies-Beahm of Bethlehem, PA



Above *DR Stitches* (on left) and *DR Bandaides* work nose to nose. They met at church, finding each other through grief after losing their spouses, and married nine years ago. The clowning program appealed to them as something they could do together. [The photo above is from St. Lukes Hospital.]

From *DR Stitches*:

While on a routine visit on general floor area I was summoned over the PA system "*DR Stitches* to pediatrics please." When I got there a 5 yr old hyperactive boy had bent the IV needle in his hand. The nursing staff asked me to occupy him so that he would calm down. Then I was told to go with him into a treatment room to have the IV put back in place. It took one nurse to hold one hand, another to hold his elbow, and a third nurse to insert IV. And it took *DR Stitches* to hold his free hand and calm him. We watched TV together for 45 minutes until he had received all his medicine. The child knew when the bell went off that his medicine was finished. I called the nurse and we were both released from pediatrics with many thanks from the nursing staff.

When I go to enter a room I knock and peek around the corner for them to see my face. If curtains are drawn we go to the next room. Also if patient is sleeping we let them sleep.

When encountering blind patients there is a sign above the bed "cannot see." This is when I go to my magic violin and "play" anything from Bach to Western music on the push button violin.

One day when I was visiting in the CCU unit I ran into a large family. Some people were in the patient's room and some were in the hallway. I approached the people in the hallway and they said, "We really need your visit." I entered the room and held the hand of the patient. They told me she would not live much longer. I listened to the family for a few minutes and left them with some stickers and smiles -- lifting the spirits of everyone, but the clown carried their sorrow away. We feel blessed indeed to be able to talk and share after our rounds. This helps. Also, it's a good day for me when someone says "You made my day!"

From *DR Bandaides*

A funny thing happened one day: I met a young woman in the cafeteria who wanted me to visit her dad. She told me that her dad had seen smiley face stickers on some people while he was being admitted and he wanted one. He was so adamant about this that the admitting staff member found some new stickers with the back still on

and saw to it that he had one. Dad put the sticker on his abdomen when he went into surgery. When he woke up the doctor had saved the sticker and put it on his surgery dressing. When I went to see the Dad he told me the same story except he said "Wanna see my sticker?" He quickly lifted his hospital gown to show me and I shut my eyes so quick saying "OK OK"

In 1990 took my clown name of *Bandaides* I knew that laughter was a band-aid that could heal a broken heart. I wanted to be a big band aid with my humor. So at that time it was like a dream or desire. I found *Bumper T* in September of 2002, took the class on hospital clowning and have been doing it ever since.

I've had enough life experience to help me be a compassionate person because in many cases I feel like I was there. I look at the life at the moment.

Lois (a patient I saw for about 4 months before she died) had a large family - eight children and eight step- children Her room was filled with photos of babies. Lois was on a ventilator and could not talk, yet we communicated. One day I entered her room there were no photos on the wall. I said "Lois I save this room 'til the end of the day so I can see these babies. Where are they?" She produced a folder with them and I looked at each one. The following week the photos were back on the walls. Lois died 1 month later. It was so hard to clown that day. I went into waiting rooms and rode elevators. I received a note of thanks from the family. They said "Lois gave up before you started visiting her and made her smile. It was the first time we saw her smile in a long time. She gave up when the photos came down, and you came and then she fought some more. Thank you for giving me more time with my Mom." That "Thank you" is what helped me most.

I have learned to not look at the suffering as much as look at the inner child wanting to be free of the suffering and pain. That is what I need to focus on to be able to let my clown feel free to bring on the smiles: seeing pain slide off a face and a smile replace it; being told I made their day; and knowing I make a difference. What powerful words "you made a difference today." My beliefs were that God makes the day and if I made a difference I was doing what God had planned for the day. My advice is to love someone and laugh everyday.

BANDAIDSP@aol.com