

To the right are some of the 50 larger than life clown sculptures that graced the streets of Sarasota in this unique fund-raiser for the TideWell's Children's Services Program

"We believe in hope as a primary component of this program; families and children are continuously encouraged to seek joy in each day. TideWell helps young patients live life to its fullest while providing pain management and symptom control. We support patients and families in developing coping mechanisms to work through the many emotions that accompany advanced illness.



Photos of the clown sculptures on these pages are reprinted with permission of TideWell Hospice and Palliative Care, Sarasota, Florida.

The project pays homage to Sarasota's circus heritage and to the healing power of laughter practiced by TideWell's Hospice Clown Circle.

"Our clowns have become so recognizable in the communities we serve, and Sarasota's rich circus heritage made this special out door art event for our area. It didn't proceed without a few bumps along the road, but we think the end result is a proper light-hearted salute to those colorful cut-ups who live to make us smile."

Marge Maisto, President/CEO of TideWell

Jackie LeClaire, who became a Ringling Brothers clown in Sarasota in 1945, at age 16 recalled:

"Everyplace you went in Sarasota in those days, you could hardly go down the street without seeing something from the circus in the yards: a rigging, a trailer, a trapeze, or a wire for practicing."

The Clown Circle participated in some of the events surrounding the project . They attended the press conference to unveil the logo & clown statue molds, to meet and greet the press and other attendees. They also attended the Clown Statue Preview Party where the statues were gathered for a sneak preview before they were placed on the streets of Sarasota. Two clowns, Betty "Sparky" Palsgrove and Beverley "Flibbertigibbet" Harris also participated on a committee to review the mold designs.



A Sarasota resident took this photo of Ella Wicks hugging "TropiClown" by Drs. Andrea and Joshua Kreithen sponsored by Premier Properties



Virginia Bluebell by Frances Coates
sponsor is anonymous

Homer by Jerry Springer with Skip Dyrda
sponsored by the Cincinnati Reds



Ra Ra Shish Boom Ba by Wende
Wilkerson sponsors - Sam and Renee
Hamad, Enterprise Associates.

Clowning Around Town began in October 2006 and clowns were on display through April 2007. So for a whole season the streets of Sarasota were filled with lively colorful clowns.

Many of the life-size clown statues were adopted by the highest bidders at live, silent and online auctions. They are now being delivered to their new homes near and far. Adoptions raised nearly \$150,000 for TideWell's Children's Services Program.

Two basic clown molds were created, one female and one male, by artist Jay Yhnke. Craftsmen at the Resource Factory created the fiberglass sculptures which were then modified and painted by a partnership between local artist and sponsors.

There were 50 clown sculptures finished and placed around Sarasota. These were oversized brightly colored clowns in different themes determined by their artist creators. The clown sculpture names give you some idea of how much fun they must have had creating these clowns - *Candice B. Paradise, Clown Royal, Sara Soda, Dipsy Doo, The Big Kahuna, The Clown Wears Prada, Butterfly Goddess, Lolli Pallza* and *Monkey Punky, Justice B. Dunn, Duck Plumber, Hoopsadaisy*, and on and on.

And then there was the logistics of sticking giant hurricane-proof clowns attached to 350 pound concrete slabs all over the city. Hospice employees even had to drive around with city workers to make sure proposed clown locations wouldn't block sight lines for drivers.

"The Clowns always find a way to win," was one of the newspaper headlines. "As we all know clowns bring up all sorts of issues and with this project they all came to the front line. There were articles entitled Object of Art or Big Bozos? And the clown statues became the target of vandals."

But we clowns know that if we fall down, we just get up and go on. So when vandals began to attack the clowns, someone volunteered to repair the clowns. In the midst of the Clown Chaos the Good Samaritan emerged. Frank Creaturo became the "Clown Doctor."

"And what those poor clowns have been through. The controversy. The savage beatings. The chainsaw attacks. The medical bulletins from the Clown Doctor. . . But, as always happens in Sarasota, the clowns always find a way to win."

Ra Ra Shish Boom Ba was taken hostage by U.S. Coast Guard crewmen who did not realize the high purpose of the clowns. Once understood the young men admitted it was a foolish prank and gathered funds to pay TideWell to replace the sculpture.

When Pigs Fly was kidnaped or "Clown napped" but when the media highlighted its plight, the sculpture mysteriously showed up several blocks away from its original position.

All of this prompted outrage and challenging reports, which also served to highlight the project. Actually, that is how Shobi found out about the Hospice Clowns. To see all the clown sculptures in color go to: www.ClowningAroundTown.org/alley.html