

# Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

www.HospitalClown.com PO Box 8957, Emeryville, CA 94608 - Vol. 11, No. 3



## *Comic Relief for Northwest Flood Victims*

Above bringing red nose relief into a shelter during the recent flooding in the US Northwest are clowns from Yakima WA: Maureen "OOCHEE" Mould, Frank "J.R. Kludders" Ward, and Tammy "Tambow" Danforth.

## ***Comic Relief for Northwest Flood Victims***

*(Continued from Page 1)*

Early Saturday morning, December 8, three Yakima (WA) Clowns set out for their 3-hour trek to the flooded areas of western Washington. "OOCHEE" aka Maureen Mould, "J.R. Kludders" aka Frank Ward and "Tambow" aka Tammy Danforth, spontaneously headed off under a sparkling blue sky and a majestic snow-covered Mt. Rainer.

The clown car arrived at their 1st Red Cross shelter, housed at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Chehalis, at 11:30 AM and the clowns were excitedly welcomed by the anxiously awaiting children and tired volunteers. For an hour and a half, the clowns brought lots of smiles and laughs armed with their funny antics, off-key Christmas songs, tricks, stickers and squeakers, spinning plates, red sponge noses, Polaroid pictures and colorful reindeer balloons.

The Red Cross Volunteers, who were making lunch, kept commenting on how wonderful it was to finally see smiles on so many faces. Amidst the fun activities, some families shared about their loss of all their possessions and how they were waiting for living quarters to be found for them. One mother with her 2-month old sleeping baby girl told of how hard it was to stay in the shelter with her little bundle. All that she had for her daughter was the car seat in which she slept peacefully, even through all the noise the clowns seemed to create. At this site, "OOCHEE" met up with a Red Cross Volunteer Mental Health Counselor who she had worked with over 20 years ago when coordinating mental health services for Head Start families in Yakima. This counselor commented that she was in New Orleans the same time "OOCHEE" had gone there with her clown troupe to bring smiles and laughter to the children in some of the elementary schools. What a coincidence! Maybe we're doing the same kind of work for disaster victims, only through different modalities...

The next stop was at the Salvation Army Distribution Center where we were greeted by piles of donated clothes, counters full of food and tables and chairs set up for families as they waited for their number to be called to speak with someone to access their needs for assistance.

At one table, a middle-aged woman told about taking in her two sisters and some of their children who had lost everything. The families had to be split up since there wasn't enough space in her home. She shared that her husband was out of work and there were not enough blankets for the kids so they were sleeping in their clothes. The kids had to wear adult socks that day since there were no children's socks in the house to share. As she was telling her story to the clowns, a thin, brown-haired woman came up to the table and gave each of the adults a \$20 bill and told them that it was a gift from God. Each of the ladies' eyes filled with tears as one said, "I can get a blanket now," while another said, "We can go get socks for the kids." Immediately, I pulled out my feather duster and dusted a small object in my hand and said, "It looks like you need a Kleenex, as I handed each a small brightly-colored sponge X, i.e., a clean 'X.'" They laughed amidst the tears, shaking their heads and telling the clowns how much they needed us to be there right then. As we were leaving, we ran into a Civil Air Patrol volunteer returning from relief work, covered in mud from his boots up to his armpits. He was ready for a break from his work and a good laugh.

Then on to the National Guard Armory where the Red Cross volunteers enjoyed playing around with us along with the children. There was a group of boys who fell in love with our colorful spinning plates and worked at balancing them on their hands and fingers. An older boy tentatively watched the fun activities from across the large gymnasium. It wasn't long before he came over to try his talents with spinning and balancing plates. He even posed for a Polaroid picture with the other boys and clowns. We captured another heart with smiles and our infamous brightly colored spinning plates.

Our last stop was at another Red Cross Shelter, housed at the LDS Church where many of the families were out at their homes with rescue workers assessing their losses or attempting some clean-up. As our custom, whoever we saw was donned with a red sponge nose and enjoyed some laughs at our crazy antics. A young girl on crutches with a broken foot was there with her mother who claimed she was a bit apprehensive being near a clown. We stayed clear from the Mom but in no time at all, both Mom and her child were glued to us laughing along with everyone else. During our visit, rescue workers came in for a break from the mud clean-up.

By the time we were ready to head home, the Red Cross Volunteers were begging us to stay for dinner and to keep on bringing smiles. However, thinking ahead to our upcoming 3-hour journey home, we sadly declined their invitation.

As we packed our clown gear in the car trunk, we all had a feeling in our hearts that we had made a small but significant difference in the lives of those who had lost their homes and those who were lending a helping hand. Margaret Meade once said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." What a blessing to be such a "joy-bringer!" Our clown lives seem to be in a blur at times as we excitedly head off to bring more smiles and comic relief to the next unknown place.



*Comparing Big Shoes are Maureen "Oochee" Mould of Yakima WA and Civil Air Patrol Volunteer Walden*