

Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

www.HospitalClown.com PO Box 8957, Emeryville, CA 94608 - Vol. 12, No. 2



the up liftment programme of South Africa

The Gauteng (SA) Care Clowns pictured above are doing something the UP clowns call the "LOVE shower" (Risaterapia in Mexico taught it to them). A child, parent, or staff member controls the flow of love they get by lifting or lowering their hand. When they've had enough, they just drop their hand. We in turn have our *shower love hands* out over them and we keep saying "love, love, love, love, love, love," lots and lots faster and then slower until they've had enough. It's wonderful! We all learn how to say "Love" in different languages: in Xhosa its "*Uthando*," in Sotho its "*Lerato*," and in Afrikaans its "*Liefde*."

The clowns in the photo are: Spanky (Innocent Shibambo), Billy Boy (Andile Majole), Ayoba (Pule Mofodi), Sparky (Henry Letlape) and Smokey (Chris Viviers)

From *Whiskers*, the clown (Madie Fourie of Pretoria)

"If you share your laughter with someone, it will comfort them like a warm blanket. It will make them feel safe and comfortable. Laughter can break the darkest, cloudiest day into rays of sunshine and happiness. Laughter can trigger positive attitudes from the people around you."

From Lollie, the clown (Samanta Kvalsig of Pretoria)

"I would like to say that for me Lollie had to cry before she could really laugh and sometimes she laughs 'till she cries. That to me is true joy – being able to feel that deeply. I keep discovering new things about my Care Clown through this awesome organization and at the same time I am discovering myself a little bit more every day."

From *Jiggles*, the Clown (Samanta Kvalsig)

"Care clowning has touched and blessed my life in ways that will never be explained or forgotten. I am Samantha, but I am also *Jiggles* the Care Clown and before I could even notice the change, my heart had become warmer, my eyes a little clearer to what love really is, and now I'm just grateful."

From Nikki Jackman, Founder and CheerLady of the UpLiftment Programme.

"Care Clowning totally changes your life. At least for that time you are in clown, you are practicing being completely present and nonjudgmental – being in the best essence of what we are – humankind."
(*The Up is continued on next page*)



the upliftment programme

The Upliftment Programme is a *Care Clowning* and *JOY activating* organization active in South Africa. Through the amazing work of their dedicated and empathetic volunteers, they reach hundreds of children every week. These children are quite often in a hospital for months with very little social and emotional support and upliftment coming their way. Care Clowns visit hospital wards, convalescent homes, and orphanages on regular weekly rounds, sharing play and joy where there is such a need! Their vision is to share the healing power of JOY.

Currently in South Africa we have about 25 Care Clowns in Cape Town, 12 in Plett, and about 12 in Gauteng.

Mission Statement

"Sharing the healing power of JOY," we inspire socio-emotional sUPport for the children in homes and hospitals by training volunteers to become Agents of JOY or Care Clowns.

We envision a future where every child is able to share JOY regularly and in turn, others (volunteers) will find purposeful existence in sharing this JOY... UPlifting the spirits of South Africa through Joy."

Current Programs

- ★ Care Clowning Nationwide
- ★ School Care Clowning
- ★ Corporate and Community JOY, JOY talks, laughter, and JOY sessions

Formal Affiliations

- ★ Novalis Ubuntu Institution - Cape Town
- ★ EMS Emergency Medical Services - Gauteng

Goals and Objectives

- ★ To reach all the children in hospitals and institutions with long term ailments or fatal diseases, bringing them consistent doses of UPliftment and JOY right to their bedsides.
- ★ Build our network of volunteers and community members, who are committed to sharing and growing JOY
- ★ With JOY sharing and original play as the key focus to our healing and development work, we are able to UPlift consistently every week.
- ★ This includes care clowning in hospitals, outreach to HIV/AIDS orphans, TB patients and other orphaned or vulnerable children. We UPlift all in the hospitals and homes, so the staff and parents share in the JOY too.

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The Republic of South Africa has a population of 48,187,637. The capital city is Pretoria, Cape Town is the legislative center, and Bloemfontein is the judicial center.

Africa is considered to be the cradle of mankind, with some of the earliest human existence discovered in Southern Africa, dating back almost three million years ago. Modern humans have lived there for more than 100,000 years.

The population of today's South African is: 75% African, 14% Caucasian, 9% mixed race and 2% of the population are Asians. South Africa has 11 official languages: Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu.

South Africa is a middle-income, emerging market with an abundant supply of natural resources. It has a well-developed financial, legal, communications, energy, and transport systems. South Africa's stock exchange ranks among the 10th largest in the world. It has a modern infrastructure supporting an efficient distribution of goods to major urban centers throughout the region.

Growth has not been strong enough to lower South Africa's high unemployment rate. There are daunting economic problems that remain from the apartheid period, especially poverty and lack of economic empowerment among disadvantaged groups.

High crime and HIV/AIDS infection rates still plague the nation. Although great improvements have been made since the apartheid area, the nation continues to have great racial divides.

. . . . amidst all of their social problems a great program of laughter and spirituality is surfacing and gaining Upward momentum.

Enter the UPliftment Program.

“Great Bliss Is Found.

From Shobi: I've been emailing Nikki for years. We've spoken at length on the phone, but we have never met in person. With the magic of Skype we met through the internet and video. We giggled and giggled on the phone for 70 minutes. We could finally see each other and talk right there, right here. So here is some of the transcription of that encounter.



Nikki Jackman, Founder and Project Cheerlady of the Upliftment Programme

Nikki Jackman is the founder of the Upliftment Programme. She has been a professional performing artist since 1990. Her knowledge in theater, stand-up comedy, and storytelling, along with teaching drama at schools, are intricate keys to her natural facilitating and directing ability, which she has so passionately given over to inspiring the UP Program (as it is so called).

Her skills and experience include the first hand *learnings* of Fred Donaldson's Original Play, and laughter facilitator training with Dr. Madan Kataria of Laughter Yoga.

She's an inspirational teacher, joy activist, and leader, committed to sharing the healing power of JOY.

From Nikki:

This has been a very interesting and inspiring personal journey for me. It has been full of lessons, from believing in the dream, to finding sustainable ways to sustain the joy and not giving up when things get difficult, and they did, and they will. That's just the way life is - the challenges mold us.

For me, it's about living with spirit. When I am in an inspirational state, I am "in spirit." When it's about the drive and ambition, I'm not in spirit. I can feel the difference as the work lacks that core enthusiastic feeling.

There is also the lesson in this of understanding who I truly am, my strengths and weaknesses. For instance, it has taken nearly six years with "The UP" to own that I'm not an administrator - don't put me behind a desk - Yikes! My strengths are in inspiring people, creating solutions, discovering possibilities and teaching. It was so good to see, that when I let go of trying to do the things I really disliked, there were people who really loved taking on those tasks; and they do the work so well.

Tides

We've been through low tides and high tides. It was particularly challenging in the beginning. When we started in 2003, we started as a volunteer organization and for the first eight months we stayed that way. Then we received funding, and we tried paying Care Clowns a nominal fee. This meant more administration and we needed a manager just for Care Clowns. We were only able to sustain this for six months and soon The UP had a whole bunch of dependents with no way of funding them.

Starting Over

There was no guarantee that our nonprofit organization could keep paying the Care Clowns. We had expected a certain amount of money and it wasn't coming in. I was then frantically trying to find the funds to pay the clowns. A friend said to me, "Sometimes the farmer has to let the tree be and the rotten apples will fall." So I did that, but it was really difficult. Everyone was angry at me as I had created that dependency. In a way they had a right to be upset because that was the initial structure. We therefore started over and set up a volunteer organization. There were trained clowns from the salaried who continued working as volunteers.

During this process, we found that as soon as we put money into the mix, it became a job for the Care Clown. As a job, it changed the emphasis - it was no longer about the beautiful exchange that happens when it's about the spirit of joy and just being.

“Your Care Clown is really the best version of yourself.”

When we started the project, we said, "The Upliftment program uplifts the corners of our mouths." Later we realized that with such a broad statement, people don't quite get what we are about. It's not about the clown giving joy, it's about sharing joy. By giving joy, we are receiving joy also, and that flow is healing the spirit. So we have changed that statement to "Sharing the Healing Power of Joy."

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.When We Share Joy with Another

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I visited the Risaterapia Clown Doctors in Mexico City, where I was welcomed like one of their family. I have so much respect for their clown doctor program. For me, the visit was a life altering experience. Before the visit I had been trying to train clowns individually. The Risaterapia method of training is in big groups, and the groups then support each other and other groups. Their system is based on the Scout system. It inspires family involvement and family ethics, so what we learn in Care Clowning, we can integrate into our whole life. That is an inspired gift! Andrés Aguilar, the founder and my host when I was there, says, "Your Care Clown / Clown Doctor is really the best version of yourself." If you have at least once a week to practice being the best version of you, that's going to alter your life for sure.

Leaving Fear and Sharing Joy

One of the training tools we learned from Fred Donaldson (Original Play) in 2004, was how to let go of FEAR and tune into LOVE. Fred calls his work "original play," and teaches that, "Play is something that is species non specific." He has observed this by playing with wild wolves, bears, dolphins, lions and has even channeled LOVE to calm a charging rhinoceros. His mental wiring doesn't go into fear at all (his scientists' buddies in Switzerland have actually tested this). Life or society has conditioned us into false fear responses. [See Donaldson info on sidebar page 7]

For so long human beings have lived and perpetuated fear. Imagine this. The life (light) switch is off, and we are sitting in darkness. We are coming up out of darkness when we turn the light switch on, FEAR goes OFF and LOVE turns ON.

In our Care Clowning training, the whole first day is about understanding oneself and understanding fear. Fear manifests in three reactions: fight, flight or freeze. If we can analyze any fear-like scenario, we are most likely playing out one of these reactions. It's not always easy to see these reactions, but they all show themselves in the body in the same way. If we have a fear reaction – fight, flight or freeze – we may alter our breathing. Our bodies may contract and get tense. We may lose broad focus, and then we can only focus on what we are defending or escaping.

WE need to be aware of the FEAR reaction and then make a choice to respond differently. We can choose to BREATHE, LAUGH, and BE CENTERED. Suddenly our focus broadens and we have a realm of other possibilities to choose from that are LOVING.

We encourage Care Clowns to use exercises, like laughter, breathing, and that wonderful "Black Hole" exercise that Risaterapia taught us - making a black hole and throwing all our fear, anger and frustration, into the black hole - closing it up and throwing it away. We start all our Care Clown sessions by truly being vessels, by emptying of all of our "stuff." If the fear comes up, we know what it feels like - so we choose to rid ourselves of it. Like many things, the more we practice, the easier it becomes. Many of the Care Clowns have found how controlling our FEAR/LOVE awareness deeply affects every area of our lives. This is an example of how Care Clowning changes our lives.

During the time that we are "in clown," we are practicing being completely present, loving, nonjudgmental, and truly being in the best essence of who we are.

One of the expressions I often use is, "We are humankind. Human KIND - not human mean, but human kind." I believe that is what we ALL are at the core. Even people who are committing crimes are not doing it because they are mean people, they are doing it because that has become the solution for them. They don't know what else to do. Ironically they actually require fear in order to do what they do.

Another not-for-profit organization that has started in South Africa has a slogan – "Stop Crime, Say *Hello*." They are also inspiring people to appeal to their human-KINDness.

One of our Care Clowns had a burglar invade her house holding her and a friend at knife point. Thankfully, instead of going into fear mode, she began talking to the burglar. He responded to her by pouring out all his problems. She was able to eventually get him some help and the whole scenario was life altering for everyone.

The other day one of the Gauteng Care Clowns, Madie a.k.a. "Whiskers," called to check in and shared that her daughter came home and said, "Mum, I can see you've just been clowning?" Madie answered, "Oh? Do I still have some makeup on?" "No Mum," her daughter answered, "You have not stopped smiling since you've come home."

From Nikki:

Recipe for Joy

(only delightful once shared)

- 1 Vessel ~ a precious purposeful human being
- 1 cup of good intention
(This is a guideline only -more is Very healthy)
- 1 pinch of time (a little goes a long way)
- 1 touch of kindness
- 1 heap of love

- For Garnish:
2 or 3 creative dabs of face paint
1 red nose.

This is not your typical recipe, as it starts with the preparation of the garnish.

Take the human being and creatively doodle the garnish on the face. Less is more, especially when preparing to share joy with the children in homes & hospitals. A little flower or heart compliments the red nose perfectly.

Next take the time (just one hour a week) and gently, carefully, totally ego-free, mix the good intention, kindness and love and enter into a space full of needy children. It's amazing what the joyful mixture of the ingredients and the time make – JOY just naturally, magically forms and flows. Within minutes the JOY is created and shared equally with all.

So be part of the positive revolution – become an "Agent of JOY"

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Joy Session for 600 Miners in AngloGold Navachab - Karibib Mine



The mine is in the western part of Namibia, Katima is the closest town. The miners were being honored for 261 days without an injury. They were rewarded with a day full of industrial theatre, and with a laughter/Joy session by the UPliftment Programme.

The Joy Sessions [pictured above at the mine] are a combination of Dr. Kataria's Laughter Yoga and what Nikki learned "being a Care Clown, i.e., using play and the creativity of being in our inner child."

Nikki Jackman ~ Continues from Previous Page

Agents of Joy ~ Bringing Joy into the Communities

A couple of weeks ago I was involved in a Cirque du Soleil's social circus training. They have a program that work with vulnerable children who live in shelters. They've inspired us to bring JOY into the communities.

A few years back, *The UP* supported children that were not living in shelters. For these street children, we had a program called "*Busk Don't Beg.*" The idea was to have them learn busking skills. [Busking is street performing for donations -- like juggling etc.] We were taking the vulnerable children off the streets two hours on a Tuesday and two hours on a Thursday in prime crime time. We would facilitate games and basic busking skills so they could learn to busk for money instead of begging for money. We did this in conjunction with the police. The program ran for two years.

We realized, however, that if we truly wanted to make a sustainable impact, that we'd have to address the communities where the true needs existed. The children were on the street because they were unhappy and bored in their communities. So

the children were running away from either abusive scenarios or they were being sent to the urban city streets by their parents to earn money. Our next community JOY projects will be in the communities providing fun, play and joy. It is our hope that the children will be more likely to stay in their communities.

We've been focusing mainly on the children in need with our JOY reach and we realize that some volunteers are interested in sharing joy with others in need, like the elderly or communities. So we have launched "Agents of Joy." This program prepares volunteers to share JOY Sessions in homes for the aged and in community venues. It seems that very poor communities are taking on more and more stress in these changing times. They desperately need for hope, play and a place to just let go and have fun. We're combining laughter exercises with play exercises so adults can be like children again.

We piloted the community Joy Sessions earlier this year. Even though South Africa is so multi-cultural and diverse, our Joy Sessions are inclusive and, everyone is together, as one – laughing and having heaps of fun. We will be training additional "Agents of JOY" of next year.

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Lesley & Sonia (upper left corner) with staff and children of Masiphumilele Creche doing the "Banana"

"The Banana"

It's a call and response song with actions and goes like this:

ALL Banana's unite [clowns give a salute type action which the children copy and repeat]

"I said - peel banana, peel, peel banana [children repeat with movements as if the body is the banana and we're peeling it] (repeat the verse),

"I said - slice banana, slice, slice banana" [now the hand slices our body] (repeat the verse),

"I said - smooch banana, smooch, smooch banana" [now the arms smooch into an imaginary big bowl] (repeat the verse),

"I said - eat banana, eat, eat banana"[now eat big mouthfulls] (repeat the verse)

"I said - eat banana, eat, eat banana" [now eat again big mouthfulls (repeat the verse) - do it faster and go eating crazy,

"I said - oooh Banana oooh, ooh banana" [buckle over with imaginary tummy ache] (repeat the verse),

"I said - pffrrt banana, pffrrrt, pffrrrt, banana" [make a poohey fart sound] (repeat the verse),

"I said - pooooeeew banana, peeeooeeew, poeeeeew banana" [waving hand over nose with stinky "expression"

"I said - flush banana, flush, flush banana" [yup flush the loo [toilet]

"NOW GET READY"

"I said - go banana's, go, go bananas" (Everyone just runs around like crazy) (repeat the verse), "I said a go bananas. . .

Red Nose Chicken Club

The Schools Program, which I hope to see grow to gigantic giggle proportions, was started in 2005. We've been working with the Herschel Girls School's *Red Nose Chicken Club*. We support them every year with some basic training. They go to a local hospital, Maitland Cottage, twice a month. It's a new group each year. We will be taking this system into other schools next year. The UP's big thing right now is to train more trainers, so we have enough people to teach all volunteers. In the photo below is a graduation day with all the Herschel girls holding their certificates.



On the right, a Herschel Red Nose Chicken Club clown plays with a child in the Hospital.



Above, Carlo Penso a.k.a. Crazy, the Clown, does the "Black Hole" with Herschel Students. We take all our fear, frustration, anger, worries and throw them into the "Black Hole" And Zap they disappear. After the spontaneous play and laughter is set free to play and play!

If you are a Care Clown or Care Clown group (no matter how big or small), please see Page 14 for an invitation to join The Red Nose Alliance Website.

**Fred Donaldson, *A Vision of Hope Through Playing*
by Amanda Daniell, Reprinted from
www.TurningOnTheLight.com**

O. Fred Donaldson, Ph.D, a native Californian now living in Sweden and offering international seminars and workshops is one of the most exquisite men you will ever meet on this planet.

He is Grizzly Adams meets Aikido Master. He has extraordinary senses, a calm and focused presence and a genuine laugh that comes from deep within. He is as comfortable in a lair of wild animals as he is in a classroom of children.

During his workshops children and adults alike watch in pure amazement as he gracefully manages 30 children contained within the area of a large gymnastics mat. Relying on his instincts, intuition and attention to their non – verbal feedback, he gently plays with each child and offers exactly what they need at that moment: whether it is rocking a tired child to sleep or allowing an overly rambunctious child to vent his anger or excess energy, he always creates a safe place for all participants to play without fear.

Fred Donaldson has coined this play therapy “Original Play”. It is one of the most ancient and natural therapies around, yet not fully appreciated until Dr. Donaldson decided to make a career out of studying the behaviours of children and wild animals.

He left a high paying job as a Professor with years of experience teaching at the Universities of Washington and California State Hayward as well as the California School of Professional Psychology and moved into kindergarten class where he started to observe these fascinating young children. His naturally loving instincts enabled him to quickly connect with the children and learn about their “no fear” attitudes.

To this day, Dr. Fred Donaldson claims that everything he knows about Original Play has been learned from the natural play of children and animals. It is the unspoken language, the language of love, affection and mutual respect that allows for deep communication. The naturally flowing force of love engages both children and adults to willingly surrender their tough exterior for the playfulness of the youthful child inside.

In his Pulitzer Prize nominated book entitled Playing By Heart: The Vision and Practice of Belonging, Fred Donaldson describes some of his amazing experiences and explores the very practical idea that there is another way to play in the world and that “you are loveable and there is nothing to fear.” He promotes a sense of belonging and self worth through an attitude of kindness that is instinctive in children, but often lost through a culture of competition, isolation and sometimes violence. His workshops, continual research, and his book as well as over 30 published articles renew hope and faith in the instinctive core of our humanity which is created in love and a deeper sense of purpose than ever imaginable.

[Doesn't this sound like a care clown teacher? We clowns giggle our way around the hospital like little children at play. Just *Google* “Fred Donaldson Play Therapy” and read on. You'll be inspired]

Bringing Us All Together to Showcase the Global Joy Movement on The Red Nose Alliance Website. The Up Programme has initialed a website to bring our World family of Care Clowns, Hospital/Clinic Clowns, Clown Docs together so that we can support and encourage each-other. Please email your group's details to: RedNoseAlliance@gmail.com. Please include: Your Group Name, City and Country, Contact person, Website (if you have one) and what venues you clown at: i.e., hospitals, nursing homes, etc. www.RedNoseAlliance.org Email: up@lantic.net