

Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

www.HospitalClown.com PO Box 8957, Emeryville, CA 94608 - Vol. 11, No. 4



Junior Clowns On Rounds

This is the inspiration of Molly Penny, a.k.a. Ruth Cull a Registered Practical Nurse, and Therapeutic Clown at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa. She has eight or so costumes in various sizes for the hospitalized children.

“Our Junior Clowns are the inspiration. Watching these kids, as their confidence grows, as they walk around the floor as clowns, is very powerful. They are playing and their clowning is so natural. All I do is follow them, sometimes pushing their IV's, and making sure they are OK.

“I take the oncology children who are in for treatment and those that are frequent flyers. Sometimes children can be in the hospital for months. It gives them something to be involved with that is not painful and scary.

“I always make sure the parents come with us on our rounds. I have turned around on occasion to see the parents crying, as they watch their child playing. It is also very powerful for the staff and doctors who know the kids in a medical way to see them have such a good time.”

Continued on page 5 [next page]

Molly Penny's Never Ending Story



Ruth and Shobi at 2007 CATC Conference in Toronto

Ruth Cull a.k.a. Molly Penny is a Therapeutic Clown at Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) in Ottawa. She has worked as a Registered Practical Nurse at CHEO for more than 30 years and began volunteering as a clown in her off hours. In 2001 she started working two days a week as a therapeutic clown and three days a week in the Operating Room as a nurse. The funding for the clown program comes from private donations through Therapeutic Clowns Canada. In 2003 clowning went to three days, and the Operating Room to two days.

I started volunteering as a Bear Mascot for the hospital, which was the logo for the Hospital Foundation. I really had fun with the kids, but after a couple of years, it got kind of hot being in this big mascot outfit. I saw an ad in the local newspaper for a clown workshop, so I went and learned about clowning.

From Saving Pennies to . . . Molly Penny

After getting hooked on clowning, the question then became "How can I afford to go to camp and buy a costume." I must have talked out loud as my 9 yr. old nephew left the room and came back with his hand closed. "Will this help?" He opened his hand and showed me about 12 pennies, I said, "Thanks little Bud," and gave him a big hug. Later that day, I thought that even a hundred dollars would be better than nothing to get to camp...people don't like pennies, so the hospital staff, My friends and family started saving.

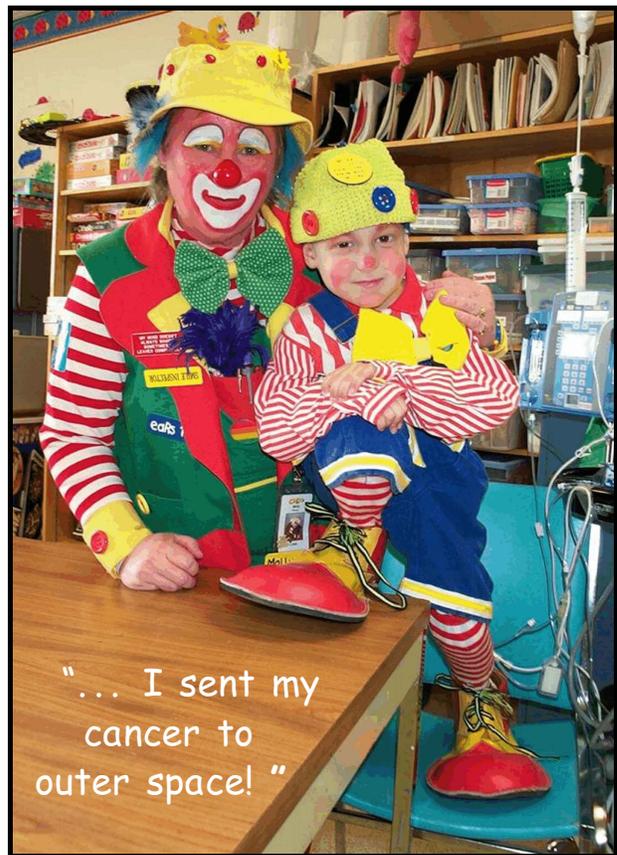
In about six months, I had collected 300,000 pennies, got to camp, bought an outfit and some items that I could use with the kids. So I became Molly Penny. This is such a special place to be, and I have never looked back. At times, I feel like I am being guided on my travels throughout the hospital, as I seem to appear at the right time for a child /parent.

The best lines come from the Children. They keep me going. I follow their humor, as it is not about me or my humor. "For example ... a 3yr old girl asked "Where does the Easter Bunny live?" I replied, "The Easter bunny lives in a hole."

She replied, "I know that, but where is the hole?" I am puzzled "Gee, I don't know." So we asked everyone that we met.

I would stop staff and parents and she'd asked them. "Where's does the Easter Bunny live?" It was priceless watching the faces of the staff, as they tried not to laugh, as this little 3yr. old asked this serious question. She wanted an answer, so we continued asking everyone we saw in the halls that day. She sure made a lot of people smile that day, with her question. I still see her in my travels, so now I do believe they are looking for Easter Island.

Eventually, I googled in the question and it came up as *classified information*, even the Prime Minister doesn't know. There were several answers to that question.



Above Molly Penny with Michael one of her Junior Clowns in training.

Michael, a five-year-old, after many months of treatment decided he wanted his cancer sent to outer space! So we asked him, "How can this be done?" He responded, "It could be done by balloon." We thought about it and said, "Good idea! What about the weather?" So he had to watch the weather report and find out which way the wind was going that day, and we checked to make sure there were no low flying airplane in the areas. It took about six weeks, we spent a lot of time as we kept coming back with problems, like getting the launch pad ready, finding an "undisclosed" location. Everyone got into it. We sent it off on balloons from the roof of the hospital. We all got out on the roof of the hospital, Michael's Mom, Dad and surgeons, and a group of oncologist.

[As you will notice Molly Penny's "shtick" (routines) are all from the children. She listens to them, picks up the idea and goes with it.]



The Never-Ending Story - Molly Penny Style

A local hockey team's mascot "Sparty Cat" came to visit the hospital, and I was on the ward at the time. The mascot was a large lion with a great mane of red hair. (See photo) A three-year-old boy (Let's call him Richie to protect his identity) appeared to be afraid of the mascot, so I stood between the two of them, and turned and gave the mascot a hug.

Sparty, the mascot, noticed right away that the child was afraid and played right along. As he was leaving and going down the hall, he turned and threw me a kiss, so I returned the gesture. Then I turned to Richie and said to the little fellow, "That's my boyfriend!" and blew a few more kissing gestures to Sparta.

At supper that night, according to Mom, who amazingly did not drop the food when she heard this, Richie asked his five-year-old sister, "How did Molly and Sparty Cat kiss?" Mom waited for the answer, but it appeared the sister was also wondering, so she could not answer him.

On his next visit for his treatment, I happen to have a colored plastic ring on my finger. Richie asked if that was from my boyfriend. I said "Why yes!" He was ok with that.

In the next couple of weeks he would ask "What's happening with your boyfriend." One day, I forgot to wear the ring and Rich noticed right away that I did not have the ring on. He was very upset. I whimpered "I lost the ring . . . and . . . I don't know how to tell my boyfriend!" Richie replied with determination "Just do it!"

The next week after coming back from Clown camp, I had the biggest diamond ring on my hand. [See below] After seeing the ring, Richie proudly announced "I'm going to be the ring bearer at your wedding . . . if you have one."

There were lots of fun moments with the kids and staff as the thought of a wedding brought many ideas. Of course Sparty never knew about the ring or anything else.

A year later Sparty Cat comes back to the hospital, and waves to me. Of course the kids all know about the ring. I said, "Just a second!" trying to get the ring out of my hand bag. What happens next was totally unexpected.

I pull the ring out of the bag, and Sparty Cat immediately gets down on one knee. I hear the kids and staff laughing as I turn 50 shades of red.

I gave Sparty a hug, and told him to stand up, as he was really enjoying the moment, and so were the kids and parents.

Pictures were taken and it is a great story with no ending in a site as I continue with the ring story.

[Editor's Note: "I guess Sparty Cat was not a Scaredy Cat, but a Smarty Cat after all." Sorry I just couldn't resist that one!]



To the left is THE Ring
Above Sparty Cat. I mean Sparty Cat and his gal Molly Penny.

Gifts from the Unknown

“Every line is a story”

A Badge of Silent Love
The Laughter of a Child
The Hope of the Parents
The Heart of the Staff
The Fear of the Unknown
A Tear in the Eye....
A Silent Prayer to Bring Comfort
The Worry of a Teenager
A Heart to Heart Connection
More Laughter from the Playroom
"You know what?" We laugh when
 We hear these words
The Strength of Children Playing
Changing a Moment
Overwhelming at Times
Courage and Hope from Within
A Hug given by a Young Child to a teenager
 and Hug returned
A Look... A Smile... A Wave...
Enjoying the moments and Laughter of Today
Tomorrow is Unknown, Dreams can
 come True....
Parents watching from the Sidelines to see
 Children play, their problems forgotten
 for a Moment
To Connect a Waiting Room of Families
 with Play, Just by a Squeak
The Spirit of a Sick Child that keeps going
 until the End.....
A Hug with No Words...
Never to be Forgotten.....I Love You
People Helping Children.....
A Wish for the Health of all Children
A Wish to Share with You....
A Child's Job is too Play!
What I saw in my first year of clowning.

The Eyes of the Heart

A Special Moment at the Elevator

While standing at the elevator for a few minutes and yes I did push the button, I heard a stroller and a sob coming from around the corner. I looked over and saw a dad pushing his daughter in a stroller. His eyes were red and he had been crying. However, his daughter was smiling and a look of joy was in her eyes at seeing a clown. Surprise!A big deep breath for me!

I touched Dad's arm, and looked at his beautiful little girl, who was smiling as I bent down to talk to her. I sure could feel Dad's pain. I started to blow bubbles for her, she started to laugh, and at this point, I did see a small smile coming from Dad.

I stood up and said, "**Maybe we should stay where she is, not where we are.**" He agreed.

As I continued to blow bubbles for the little girl, she was giggling and talking. I do not know what she said, but I agreed. She laughed and I said, "Let's catch the bubbles."

Dad at this point opened up, and told me that the doctors had given him bad news about his daughter's health. He only heard one word - cancer. His eyes started to water again, and I touched his arm, and asked if there was anything I could do. He talked with tears in his eyes and I just listened, occasionally blowing bubbles for his daughter.

I just couldn't leave him there so I was able to take him back to see the doctor and the nurse, so he could explain more about his daughter's condition.

These fifteen minutes by the elevator will never be forgotten. There are no words for these moments... it is in the eyes and the heart. By the way the little girl is doing very well, and it was the beginning of a special bond with this family.

A Dream Come True ~ So who is the Hero now?

Not only did this young hospital patient get to meet his Hockey Hero, Mike Fisher of the Ottawa Senators; he got "suited up" with the team and his hero skated him around the hockey rink! The photo tells it all.



Molly Penny's Never-Ending Props

Never ending because they have a ripple affect.

I have a remote door bell in my handbag so I stand at the door pushing an imaginary spot on the door while the bell is ringing. The button is in my hand and you really cannot see it.

A nurse asks, 'What are you doing?' and I tell her, "Nobody is in the room because they are not answering the door bell ring."

I wait and eventually I do see Mom and a six year old in the room. Finally after 4 rings Mom says "Oh, come in!" So I announce myself and spend a few moments with the Mom and child and the nurse. I leave after a few minutes to continue on my travels throughout the ward.

The next morning I was met by Mom laughing as she walked towards me. She says "I owe you one!" I really did not know what she was talking about. Apparently she was running her hand up and down the door frame looking for the door bell later that night. The nurse asked, "What on earth are you doing?" The Mom never did find the bell, but it was the start of some wonderful laughs with the family, and the clown.

The Wee Little Cards

That find their way into little hands and pockets.

"Everybody needs a note or a card. The Birthday Cards are very popular. If a child has a birthday that day, I have a card on hand to give to him/her, and if it is Mom's birthday the child has a ready-made card to give. The kids get to give them to their parents, siblings and/or the staff." This idea started with a 6yr.old trying to teach me French, his word for the day was "minuscule," so in finding everything small we came up with small cards.

Once a Mom went to look for a Birthday card for Dad. While Mom was gone we (Molly and nurse) discussed with the baby that maybe she should also give Dad a card. Her smile said it all. As she was only 6 months old she could not sign her name, so ended up putting the baby's toe print inside the birthday card. One little "big toe" just fit inside the card.

When Mom saw the card from her daughter she started to cry as the child smiled. Those parents will never forget what a difference something so small can make.

A gift from Molly. These are small 1 by 1½ inches. She makes them 20 on a page and then copies them. If you go to www.hospitalclown.com you can find templates under "Workshop handouts." Or you can make you own design. "A Big Hug" Card, "Thank you" Cards. "Good Job," "Make a wish," "Just a little note to say Hi""You are loved," Or how about putting two eyes inside saying "Some one to watch over you."

Shane's Birthday Bonanza. 13.4 MILLION CARDS!

When asked what he wanted for his birthday, he said he just wanted birthday cards. He wasn't concerned with size he just wanted **lots!** So the hospital staff and children started making him cards. The media got hold of it got busy putting out the word. As of today Shane just celebrated his 8th birthday and has more than 13.4 million cards!

He received cards from the Military in Afghanistan, many schools as far away as Japan, from the Prime Minister...the RCMP Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and even Dr. Phil. He is so happy, as he opens the cards. It gives him something else to think about instead of all of his treatments.



Shane's Birthday Cart in which he traveled around the hospital to collect his birthday cards. Bonne Fête~ french for Happy Birthday

Wee Cards

