

Patch Adams

. . . . the movie!

The movie version of Patch Adams' book *Gesundheit!* will be released by Universal Pictures for Christmas 1998 starring Robin Williams. It will be directed by Tom Shadyac, (he directed *Liar, Liar*) and produced by Mike Farrell of M.A.S.H. fame.

Gesundheit! (Bringing good health to you, the medical system, and society through physician service, complementary therapies, and joy) is committed to building a hospital/healing community in West Virginia. They have the property and have started building.

In Patch's words "Life is surely surreal. For 26 years I have tried unsuccessfully in every possible arena to find funds to build a service-oriented hospital that satisfies both caregiver and patients in joyful health care. For years people have said that our silliness has been a deterrent to people taking that hospital seriously. Recent developments [the movie] make me wonder if silliness, in the end, may build the hospital."

Patch continues "This summer I spent some days in Robin Williams' house . . . Robin is the actor I would have wanted. . . . It was thrilling, fun, deep . . . Robin and I clowned for several hours in U.C.S.F. Hospital with kids who were very sick."

"If we can make our dream a reality, then you can boldly go after your own. You can lean on us for help. Please use us as a stimulant . . . We are also here as an irritant. We must refuse to accept things the way they are because they are hurting everyone. We have a breakdown of community, a loss of a sense of belonging . . . Everyone needs a health care system - why not use that as an impetus to bring people together as a community that creates a healing environment."

Bernard Siegel, M.D. author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles* writes "I have learned from Patch the courage it takes to be different and to reveal your wounds: behind his clownlike persona lies a great deal of wisdom, and it often falls to the court jester to speak the truth that those in power need to hear."

I have never met Patch in person, but he gets the Hospital Clown Newsletter and occasionally he will send me a post card or an encouraging note. I have called him "worlds greatest cheerleader" I love his passion and persistence, but most of all I love his sense of play. It is this spirit of play and fun that Patch Adams spreads everywhere he goes and instills in every project he supports. It is fun from the heart. It is JOY.

Be Joy!

By Gina Rose Halpern

Director, Healing Through Arts
Berkeley, California

Our lives have been touched and transformed by our association with Patch Adams and *Gesundheit*. We have been tickled back into health. Our sense of purpose, as doctors, nurses, educators, and most importantly as human beings has been restored through love and laughter.

Years ago, I had made a vow to use my art in the service of healing, but I stayed hidden behind the phone, computer and the role of Director of Healing Through Arts. I hid myself in the studio and sent the art into the world to speak for me. I was a productive, but not a happy person.

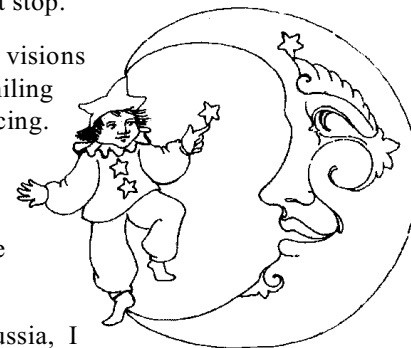
In June of 1995, I met Patch at a Healing Arts Conference where I was presenting a project I had just completed for the Children's Hospital of San Diego. After my presentation, Patch said to me "***It is not enough to make art about joy, you must BE JOY!***" This was a sacred mandate which I did not know how to fulfill, or even how to begin. So I signed myself up to go to Russia with Patch's clown tour, and learn from the master.

We left the airport in our clown clothes and did not take them off for two whole weeks. We began our tour of pediatric hospitals in Moscow in a cancer ward. There were rooms and rooms of bald children with luminous eyes. As an artist I would find myself drifting to the bedside of the most immobilized children. I would follow their line of vision to see what they were looking at all day. Then I would take out my crayons and create a little shrine in front of their eyes.

In the tiny room of the burn hospital a little boy was shrieking in pain from burns over half of his body. Patch and another doctor hovered over this bed crooning, but because of the burns on his back he just faced the wall and wailed. I somehow felt that I should draw for him, and leaning over I placed the paper where he could see it, and began to create.

I drew a smiling crescent moon with a little clown dancing on its tip, and as a rainbow appeared, he stopped crying. Patch leaned over to me and said, "What you are doing is Real Magic. Don't stop."

For an hour I drew, taping visions of birds and stars and smiling cats to the wall he was facing. In the process of drawing for him, I remembered my own reason for existing. To "BE JOY," to create more beauty in the world.



Since my return from Russia, I have formed a children's music, art and performance group. We call ourselves "Real Magic."