

Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

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The Prescott Clowns

From Prescott Elementary School
Oakland, California

This energetic group of clowns is directed in an after school program by Aileen Moffitt, a second grade teacher, aka "Irma La Clown." These children receive training in circus skills from professionals, then dazzle everyone with their juggling, unicycle riding, and dancing. They give back to their community tenfold with workshops in classrooms and performances at many community events, nursing homes, and shelters -- besides a long list of school assemblies.

"Wherever we perform -- from lavish banquet receptions to small neighborhood events -- it is our intention to dispel negative myths about the children of West Oakland. And we do!" These children sometimes labeled "at risk," become "at promise" behind a red nose.



On the cover: *The 1998 Senior Prescott Clowns*

Photos by: **Betty McAfee**, except where indicated.

Clown Makeup by: *the Clowns themselves*

Clockwise from the top left: Jacori "Orangey Orange" Lee; Tashika "Lifesaver" Boston; Brandon "YoYo" Swain; Angelina "Slinky" Johnson; Robert "CiMore" Gaines; Jerome "Feather" Martin; Alexis "Roller Coaster" Meredith; Eric "E.T." Yanez; Dominique "Sunny" Simmons; Aracely "Rosey" Rodriques; Angelic "Cherry Nose" Brown; Jessica "Polar Bear" Bennett; Shamika "Genie" Bell; Olajuwon "Bogus" Bell.



***Aileen Moffitt, "Irma La Clown,"
Director of The Prescott Clown Troupe***

Aileen is the first to tell you that it is her full time job that supports her commitment. Although they do get some performance fees and some grant funding, she still gives much of her time on a voluntary basis.

"If you really want to set up a program like this, anyone can. I am not particularly talented in circus ways. I just have the motivation to help the kids. Anyone who wants to start a program is welcome to come to our school and steal all of our ideas. I would be happy if someone would clone the program for their school." If you want to contribute to the Clown Troupe (they are raising funds for a van) or if you want information about the group, you can write Aileen at:

Prescott Clown Troupe, c/o Aileen Moffitt,
3864 Brown Avenue, Oakland, CA 94619

Tax deductible checks can be made payable to: Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation (their fiscal agent) and mailed to the above address.



"All it takes is a warm heart and a red nose."

Aileen Moffitt started this school clown program after taking a clown class with Arina Iscaason 20 years ago at the Oakland Parks and Recreation Department.

This will be the 15th season for the Prescott Clown Troupe. Last year in addition to the Senior Clowns, they incorporated a Junior Clown Troupe - third graders of 8 or 9 years old. This year the Junior Clowns will become the Senior Clowns. The Senior Clowns are 4th and 5th graders. However, when they give shows, some of the former clowns come back from middle and high school to add their energy.

The purpose of the program is twofold: 1) to provide leadership training, circus and performing skills training, and performing opportunities for the youngsters in a context that allows them to fully explore their talents, enrich self esteem, and develop as responsible citizens, and 2) to serve the community by providing professional-level entertainment by children for audiences of all ages.

During their last season they entertained at 15 schools, 25 classroom workshops and appeared at more than 30 community events.

The shows are done at times that do not conflict with school time. They miss only six days of school in the entire year. Aileen being a teacher makes the whole experience educational. The young clowns do a running story of their experience in their own "clown's story," and write all the "thank you letters"

Recruitment for new clowns begins each October and is open to all 4th and 5th graders. By November only the most committed remain. Students work 3-4 afternoons per week receiving training during the fall months. This includes many master classes with Bay Area circus professionals. In the winter, the clown troupe goes into rehearsal for spring and summer school performances.