

The Katy Klowns meet regularly for a good laugh and to brush up on their funny business

Clowning Around in Katy

Katy Klowns Spread Smiles and Cheer in Community

Written by Noreen Stavinoha & Photos by Marisa Hugonnett

In 1997, Cy Wagner and his sisters saw an ad for clown school at LaCross University and decided to give it a try. Wagner (aka Digger the Clown) has been clowning ever since. As the founder of Katy Klowns, Wagner and his wild and wacky group spread laughter and fun wherever they go. Wagner now conducts his own clown school to help other Katyites discover their silly side. Clowning is a satisfying hobby for the funny at heart who have other jobs to pay the bills, but who enjoy giving back to the community. "The best moments of my life have been as a clown," Wagner says. "You get to go places and do things you can't do as a civilian. You get 15 minutes of fame every time you're in a parade. You represent every clown that ever was, so when they see you, they see Red Skelton, they see Emmett Kelly, because you are 'the clown.' You lose who you are, because you take on that persona, and that's what they see."

Bringing Laughter to Everyday Life

The group sometimes volunteers at hospitals where they work to spread cheer one patient at a time. "Making people happy is what we're all about," says Natasha Fischer (aka Bunny the Clown). "If you've changed just one person, that's satisfying to me." Any place where there are people presents an opportunity to be a clown. Once, Digger and two other members of Katy Klowns were in costume and waiting in line at Wal-Mart. Of course, they were noticed by everyone so they began handing out "I'm someone special" stickers to all the kids and acting silly to delight all of the bored customers.

Balloons, Tricks, and Jokes

Clowns often find they have a talent in a certain area and will make it their specialty. Balloon animals, magic tricks, and practical jokes are some of the most popular clown talents. Fischer combines her painting ability with making kids happy and excels at face painting. "I can't tell you how good it feels to work around a bunch of kids that want to be just like you," she says. "I feel like a superhero." Another important skill for clown students is magic. Whether it's visiting patients in the

hospital or entertaining at a birthday party, magic tricks are always a clown's mainstay.

Laughter is the Best Medicine

Clowning for sick children seems to be the most meaningful for this group. Like the time they visited the intensive care unit at Texas Children's Hospital, meeting a severely handicapped child who was almost unresponsive. When Sweetie Clown played her harp, the little girl smiled, raised her hand, and gestured for Sweetie to play more. The nurses were astounded and vowed to play music for their little patient on a regular basis. In another instance, one of Digger's jokes was the catalyst that brought a patient out of a waking coma following brain surgery. When he first met the patient, she was sitting on a hospital bed in the lotus position, like she was in a trance. After performing a simple magic trick called the pecan, she began giggling, and after a few moments, she woke up. Wagner left the room with her family and caregivers astounded – they thought she might remain in a coma for the rest of her life. Who says laughter isn't the best medicine?

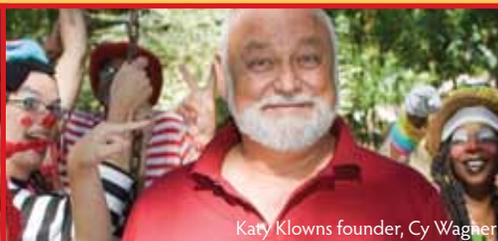
The Silly Lining

Wagner, Fischer, and their fellow Katy clowns store up the laughs and funny tricks to use in any situation they may encounter. "Life is like a wheel, where experiences repeat themselves," says Wagner. "Whenever I have a moment where I wish I had done or said something differently, I remember that, and when it happens again, I'm ready." And with clowns, that moment could present itself at any time. "A clown keeps that persona in the back of his or her head all the time, and there are always opportunities to bring some fun into ordinary situations," says Wagner, adding, "Clowning gives people a chance to see things in a way they never saw before." KM

NOREEN STAVINOHA lives in Katy with her husband and miniature schnauzer. She loves to tell the stories of interesting people.



Haley and Abby



Katy Klowns founder, Cy Wagner



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