


Life on the Bay



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A Social Publication

For The Residents Of The Duxbury Bay Area Neighborhoods



JEANNIE FAWCETT
is Making a Difference!

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Photos By Karen Wong

A Happy Heart Lives In Duxbury!

Jeannie Fawcett Uses Her Nose To Bring A Smile To Faces

One night nine years ago in a local restaurant, Jeannie Fawcett was waiting for her husband, Red, to arrive to celebrate her birthday. In walked Red carrying her birthday gift wrapped in very unorthodox wrapping - a loaded trash bag with a smiley face balloon popping out of the top! To Jeannie's surprise, it was full of balloons, face paint, silly string, flowers that squirt water and all sorts of other clown props. The gift was the prelude to an even bigger gift -- a gift certificate to Clown School! Needless to say, everyone seated at the tables around the room was curious and before long there was a party of strangers at Jeannie's birthday party, all having a great time!

It wasn't long afterwards that Jeannie, an RN, decided to replace her nursing scrubs with a bright red nose, and apply to Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe, headquartered in Needham, MA. A nurse for many years, she was excited that through volunteer clowning, she would be continuing to help sick children and adults in the hospital setting.

Founded in 1997, the non-profit Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe is a group of over 21 volunteers who are specially trained to engage, empower and give choices to children and adults in a medical environment. Every year the clowns visit more than 2,500 hospitalized patients, infusing hope into the toughest moments for both the patients and their families. The clowns are volunteers that receive



extensive professional training in the delicate art of engaging children and adults in the hospital and in doing improvisation-based/child-centered hospital clowning (Jeannie went through over 90 hours of training!).

Jeannie, whose clown name is "Happy Heart" explains that in contrast to patients not having much of a voice with regards to their own treatment, she and the other members of the troupe offer the child or adult patient the opportunity to be "in charge." For example, it is only with permission from the patient that the clowns enter his or her room. Although most kids and adults welcome the clowns, it is perfectly fine and empowering for the patient to be able to say "no" to a clown's visit. After all, a patient can't say "no" to doctors and nurses.

Once the clowns have permission to enter a room, the door to imagination opens, allowing the patient to be anyone, anywhere or anything he or she chooses to be. It is heartwarming to witness, if only for a few minutes,

the moment when the hospital world and the world of "sick" vanishes and is replaced with silliness, giggles, magic and fun. Hopefully, with this type of patient-centered care, the doors to healing are opened. Humor has been documented to be a huge part of ones healing process.

Jeannie clowns on both pediatric and adult floors at Boston Medical Center and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospitals in Charlestown and Cape Cod. Visits are not limited to patients' rooms. "Red noses" can also be seen in the ER, Intensive Care units and waiting rooms. Jeannie performs some silly acts that include placing stickers on IV bags to create an aquarium effect or creating invisible balloon animals (because balloons aren't allowed) or pretending to paint pictures on the hospital walls. She might also dance and sing hoping to be voted onto "Dancing with the Stars" or "The Voice," all the time following the lead of the patients and families as they coach her to stardom. Jeannie states, "Nothing is scripted," and she emphasizes that "whatever happens in



the patient's room is in the moment and patient-centered."

Jeannie has been clowning for over eight years. She says that clowning creates "doses of fun" and has become more and more an integral part of medical teams in hospitals world-wide. Not long ago clowns from Israel who call themselves "The Dream Doctors" and the Hearts & Noses Hospital Clown Troupe visited one another in their countries to exchange ideas and to learn from each other.

Jeannie is as passionate about her family as she is about clowning. She and Red were married in 1967 and have four children, three of whom live in Duxbury with their kids. Their children are heavily involved in the fifth generational family fuel oil and heating business and are active members of the Duxbury community. Jeannie loves living so close to her grandchildren and her grandkids love Happy Heart as much as the patients do!

A young sick child once told Happy Heart, "Think nice things and your heart opens to create peace in the world." It seems that's a motto that both Jeannie and her Happy Heart persona infuse each day.



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Happy Heart with her Grandchildren!

