

WEEBLE WORDS

Volume 2, Issue 6, June 2008



ON SANTA'S BELLY

Hello, I am **Santa George Martin** from North Smithfield Rhode Island. I became involved and trained with the Visiting Nurses Association of Rhode Island (V.N.A. of R.I.) Home and Hospice Care after deciding to be a part of the Santa-America Family. My first visit was set through **Susan Lake**, the Chaplain for the V.N.A. of R.I. Ms. Lake told me the Hospice never had a Santa before and was thrilled that I wanted to volunteer. I explained the mission of Santa-America and gave her information I had downloaded and printed from the S-A site.



Ms. Lake said we were to visit a 7 year old little girl who, because of her illness, never had a personal visit with Santa. The little girl, **Sabrina**, was blind with other health issues. Ms. Lake told me Sabrina had never spoken and no one knows how much she could actually comprehend. I had seen ill children before, at the mall and other various appearances, and loved to interact with them. I was pretty nervous before the visit but Ms. Lake said to “do what I know how and things would be fine.” I am not sure but I think the original visit to Sabrina was more for her Mom than Sabrina herself. We met in front of Sabrina’s home with the photographer who was to take some pictures of the visit. We entered the home and I met

Sabrina’s Mom and Grandmother as well as a nurse in the home for the visit... all just happened to be women.

As soon as I saw Sabrina, I was not nervous any more. I felt like I was supposed to be there. She was a beautiful little girl and melted my heart. Immediately I hoped she would enjoy her visit with Santa. I shook my sleigh bells and Sabrina reacted to the sound. Pictures were taken and kind words exchanged with the family. Finally I asked what I had wanted from the moment I entered the home... “Could I please hold Sabrina in my arms?” Her Mother had me sit in a comfy chair. As I held Sabrina, I spoke to her softly. She seemed to be smiling at me. Something inside told me to do a little Santa laugh. I thought to myself, “Here goes” and I softly said “Ho Ho Ho” which made Sabrina bounce on Santa’s belly and she began to laugh. I did it again a bit louder and she laughed even more. Sabrina’s

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We need help reaching our children of military families. Please call Santa-America if you can help!

Santa's visit to children come from referrals by the medical community and hospice as well as from special needs educators and social workers.

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photo by Elizabeth
McGonagle Graham

SPIRIT OF SANTA-AMERICA

Santa Ernest



While Elves Cathy and Nita were in St. Augustine, I was representing Santa- America at the national meeting of our largest supporter: Jewelers for Children (JFC). The association meets annually in Las Vegas as part of an international jewelers convention, and decides on the charities they will support for the upcoming year. Among them: St. Jude's Children's Hospital and both the national and international Make-A-Wish Foundations. Santa America is honored to have again been chosen for support in 2008.

In speaking to the JFC Board of Directors, I placed an "ELF" cap on the table in front of an empty seat next to me. Upon rising to speak, I introduced, as part of our team, the late **Jeffrey W. Comment**, former CEO of Helzberg Diamonds and founder of "Santa's Gift." Jeff Comment (Santa Jeff to us) will always be a respected leader in the international jewelry industry. Every member of Santa America receives a copy of Jeff's book, "Santa's Gift" when they join our team. His spirit lives on with each of us as we visit our special children every day of the year. It is an honor for Santa America to be chosen once again to be a recipient of support from the Jewelers' for Children. Their confidence in our mission is critical to our continued growth in the USA and around the world. Thank you all for your commitment to making Santa America our nation's largest volunteer Santa service organization. Remember... It's Elf before Self!

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HELP THE ELF!-ELF NITA

Happy June to all our Santa's, Mrs. Santa's and Elves. Is it HOT!!!! June has invaded the Gulf Coast with a vengeance. Hot doesn't even begin to describe the weather. But, we know that, and still love it here. The last weekend in May, Elf Cathy and I had the pleasure of attending the Palm Tree Santa's meeting in St. Augustine, FL. What a fun weekend. I think we stood St. Augustine on its ear. Imagine a double trolley filled with Santa's in all kinds of Santa attire, Mrs. Claus' and some elves, waving and shouting HO, HO, HO!!! Our driver even wore an elf hat with big pointy ears and rang his bell when we passed "anyone"!! People stopped in their tracks, waved, yelled "I love Santa" and pointed us out to their children. By the end of the day Saturday, I think word had spread that "Santa was in town".

On the serious, work related side, I have to tell you that it has been one the best parts of my experience as Administrative Director for Santa-America. I always enjoy emailing and speaking with each Santa on our sleigh. However, emailing and phone calls can't come close to meeting someone in person. What a pleasure it was to get to meet each of our Santa's and their wives who attended the meeting. It has put what I do in such a much better perspective, and I had a pretty good one to begin with. I am always awed by the work that you all do and the sincerity and joy with which you do it. Hopefully, if time and funds permit, we'll get to more of the regional meetings and meet even more of our great "family". What a wonderful organization to be associated with. I am humbled by and proud of each and every one of you.



Well, I've gotten almost to the end of my message to you without asking for anything. You guys know what to do at this point, and I look forward to hearing from those of you who need to send me things. I know I can count on you to get your compliance items to me. And as always, if you need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call or email. Have a great summer, stay cool, weather and other wise!!!

BEHIND THE RED SUIT

Santa George Martin

Santa, tell us a little bit about yourself?

I'm a 55 year young Santa married to my lovely wife Lorraine for 32 years. We have a 25 year old adopted daughter Tiffani. I act and direct community theatre, as does my daughter. We have 4 cats: Kiki, Ember, Zoey and Molly, a terror. We were all born and brought up in Rhode Island and love it here. Professionally, I'm a mold maker for a company that builds blood processing machines and disposables. I enjoy working with children. I enjoy television shows like *Ghost Hunters*. Reality shows are fun to follow also. My wife is a stay at home Domestic Goddess and our Tiffani is a pharmacy tech for CVS.

What was your first experience as Santa Claus?

My first experience as Santa was back in 1969; I was 16 years old. My brother asked me to play Santa for his boys. I went to Sears and bought an inexpensive suit with a cotton beard. I was afraid they would recognize me, but as we all know Santa is bigger than life. I lowered my voice as much as I could and did my best Santa impression. They were quite young and were convinced! The next year I upgraded to a better beard set and had them believing for a few more years.

How did you decide to become Santa?

I had a great time with my brother's boys so I did it for other family members. In 1976, I married Lorraine. Our first Christmas she made me a custom suit out of red corduroy. I went to a costume shop and ordered a very expensive beard set. We started a family tradition by visiting with our young nieces and nephews as Santa. My wife became Rudolph. I made a reindeer head from paper mache and she made a fur suit. I even added a red nose that lit up via a switch in her mitten. In 1983 she retired the Rudolph suit to care for our daughter. Thru the years, Tiffani would say things like, "Daddy, you missed Santa again" and "Daddy, Santa has blue eyes just like yours." She finally knew it was me but did not tell us because she liked the visits. Tiffani's co-workers call me Santa when I shop in the store. She says they tell her how lucky she is to have Santa as her Dad.

Anything else you'd like to share?

The feeling I get from being Santa is a satisfaction I cannot begin to describe. To see the little smiling faces (and the adult smiling faces) is a great reward. I have acted in approx. 60 stage shows from bit parts to leads but the best role ever is Santa. There is no script and the words come from your heart. What could be a better role than that?

I am a cancer survivor going on 8 years. Although I feel that I did not have it as tough as many, it was a life changing experience. I understand the fight when you are ill and know the value of Love, Hope and Joy. There is always a "what if" thought in your mind. Early on I decided to be positive and make the best of a tough situation. I did extremely well with the chemo and my oncologist, **Dr. Anthony Testa**, saved my life. I have not seen another oncologist that is as caring for his patients. It was a running joke with the oncology nurses that I still had hair long after they said it would be gone. After quite a while, I lost my hair. Some people are not comfortable even saying the word cancer. I did my best to joke at work and try to ease their minds by telling them to say the word cancer a few times, then I'd ask them if it hurt. I would joke that I did not have cancer germs so it was ok for them to talk to me. I believe it made people more comfortable and able to deal with the issue. I was attending a company meeting once during chemo and asked the person sitting next to me if I was the only one in the meeting without eye lashes and eyebrows. He laughed out loud and had to leave the meeting. This is how I dealt with my cancer. Everyone is different. I feel lucky to be as well as I am now.



Santa George Martin and Mrs. Lorraine Claus.

The best role ever is Santa. There is no script and the words come from your heart.

---Santa George

Please send in your stories and pictures of your special visits. We need to refresh our photos to better represent the diversity of our Santas and our coverage throughout the country.

Santa-America is member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO).

Weeble Words

CELEBRATE SANTA UPDATE



We are proud to officially announce that the Reindeer Owners & Breeders Association [ROBA] will be combining their convention with ours and will be held simultaneously with Celebrate Santa at the Gatlinburg Convention Center! In fact, **Special reindeer and Santa seminars** will be held on Tuesday for those interested in learning more about Santa's magnificent coursers. This is a historic gathering of both groups that may NEVER take place again!

Many people have asked about friends relatives and of course, their children. They are ALL invited and we have worked out special deals for every one of them. See our "Frequently Asked Questions" section of <http://CelebrateSanta.com> for all the information and pricing.

We have added a parade application for special groups or floats who wish to participate in the Holly & Shamrock Parade. It is located under the parade page.

It is scarcely a month until early bird registration ends?? Those who have not sent their deposit (or full registration) by July 15th stand to lose between \$50.00 - \$78.25 in savings!

For those of you who are pretty certain you are attending, we would like to suggest that you should make reservations at your preferred hotel NOW. No hotel will charge your credit card before you arrive in March! They will merely take your information and hold your reservation. You may cancel at any time without penalty. We would like to see more of our 150 registrants (so far) book their hotels. This will enable us and our hotels to plan better for all of you.

We LOVE to hear from you. We hope you send any questions you may have to us or post them on our blog. Don't be shy! Ask away – we are happy to help! Keep looking at our blog www.celebratesanta.blogspot.com and check your email for all the exciting news.

ON SANTA'S BELLY (CONT.)

reaction to the belly bounce was unbelievable and had everyone in tears and when she got vocal ... it was like she was talking to Santa.

As you can probably imagine, this visit will stay in my heart for all time. I hope to visit Sabrina again during the Summer months. I was so thankful that I got to make this visit and look forward to many more with many more families. I got a nice card from Sabrina's Mom thanking me for coming and saying how the visit was beyond her expectations. I saw so many smiles that day I could not wait to do it again.

The first thing I said to Susan was when can we do another? I was pumped up beyond anything I had hoped for. We did do one more visit to a young boy in the hospital with a brain tumor and although I was told not to expect much from him he perked right up and wore my hat and I lay next to him in his bed and pictures were taken and presents opened and he even said a nice loud Ho Ho Ho !!! This too was a memorable visit. He has since passed but I am still hoping to make a return visit to see his twin brother. That's another story.

Thank you Sabrina!

SPOTLIGHT ON SANTA

Thanks to the hard work of **Santa Carl Burke**, Santa-America is the recipient of a \$1000 grant from Wal-Mart Super Center in Danville, VA. This grant will deliver our Santa-America HUG to Danville's special children and their families. The "Santa-America HUG" is a polar fleece scarf with mittens attached on the ends designed to remind children that Santa's love and warmth is always with them. Contact the North Pole to learn how you can request this grant.

Pictured from L-R, Mrs. Anne Claus, Ms. Brenda Hudgins (Wal-Mart Department Manager for Donations), and Santa Carl Burke.



ST. AUGUSTINE GATHERING

Elf Nita and **Elf Cathy** spent the last weekend in May with a jolly bunch of Santas in St. Augustine, FL. In addition to the time spent spreading Love, Hope and Joy through town, Elf Nita and Elf Cathy shared program updates from the Santa-America North Pole. Santa-America wants to thank all attendees for bringing goodies to support the SA raffle. The group raised \$520.00! Way to Go! Although many more had hoped to attend, we want to thank **Santa Bob Elkin, Santa Frank Miller, Santa Dave Smith, Santa Vic Sitmer, Santa Jim Herberman, Santa John Siebler, Santa Peter MacKenzie, Santa Don Chapman, Santa James Chason, Santa Larry Porter, Santa Jim Williams and Santa Hugh McDowell ...and their Mrs. Claus' and Elves** for being part of SA!



Above, the Palm Tree Santas. At right, Santa John Siebler and Elf Nita. Across, Mrs. Sheila Claus, Santa Jim Herberman and Elf Nita.

CREATE AN ELF!

This summer is an excellent time for you to talk with area high school principals about developing an elf program in your community. To learn more on building a program, contact Elf Cathy at info@santa-america.org.



SANTA TO DO'S

Elf Nita still needs your paperwork!

Submit your pictures and stories! We'll upload to the website.

Send the name and contact information of a local paper and reporter. We'll send them a note about your involvement with Santa-America.

Contact Santa-America for your e-copy of the Santa-America Volunteer Sleight Kit.

Identify a venue for a Santa-America fundraiser. Contact Elf Cathy or Elf Nita for details.

Share with elected officials your special visits and the work of Santa-America. Elf Cathy and Elf Nita are ready to support you as needed.

Contact Elf Cathy to learn how you can team up with an area school to build an Elf Program.



June '08

DOES YOUR COMMUNITY KNOW OF SA?

For Santa-America to continue to grow, individuals, businesses, and local communities need to know of our special work... and **you are the local face!** Santa-America encourages all supporters to help spread our message. If you are comfortable speaking in front of a group, ask to be a speaker at area civic and service groups (examples include Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and Lions Club). Santa-America will work with you to develop the proper presentation for the audience...as well as an individualized SA photo sheet. If group presentations are not your forte, contact your local chamber of commerce and let them know about Santa-America. Many chambers have networking meetings where you can inform your local business community about our work. Don't forget about print and visual media. We would like to see every Santa have a press release in area newspapers about their involvement and support of Santa-America. Email your contacts to Elf Cathy at CathyBarnette@Santa-America.org or call with questions.



Love, Hope &
Joy
Wrapped in a
Warm Santa
Hug
for Special
Children &
their Families
365 Days A
Year!

MORE WAYS WE NEED YOU!!!

Given the current economic condition, we need you...Santa's... to build a local base of supporters to back the gifts, training and expenses that make your visit so valuable. Support can be varied and suit your Santa style. Ideas include Santa breakfasts, speaking to civic groups, requesting support from area foundations, charity motorcycle rides, etc. Contact Elf Cathy or Elf Nita for specific things you can do to build support.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

July 2008-Long Leaf Pine Santa Gathering. For more information, contact Santa Jac Grimes at santajac@triad.R.R.com.

March 2009- Celebrate Santa Convention. Visit www.CelebrateSanta.com for details.

Summer 2009 Santa-America Training Conference...details to follow in upcoming issue.

Gathering not listed! Contact us so we can add it to the list!



Santa-America has grown to almost 300 dedicated Santas, Mrs. Claus and Elves in 44 states and 6 foreign countries.