

# WEEBLE WORDS

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## TIS THE SEASON...365 DAYS A YEAR.

It is mid-February. The phone rings. Santa is on one end; his local hospice coordinator on the other. The hospice coordinator explains to Santa that she has a 7 year old boy who needs him. The little fellow has lost a dear grandparent and is starting to withdraw from his family and immerse himself in video games. The boy is struggling to understand why his grandparent was taken from him, as well as wonder what he could have done to stop death from happening.



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.

Santa needs no convincing for the visit.

Regardless of his schedule there is always time for a child in need. Santa contacts the boy's family to learn more about him (pets, video games, friends, foods, etc.) and schedules the first of many visits.

Two days later Santa is with Jacob\*. At first, Jacob wonders why Santa is visiting. Santa explains that he is visiting to help him during this difficult time. He wants Jacob to know that Santa loves HIM and he is very special. Jacob and Santa talk about the North Pole, the activities of the elves and why Santa's beard is short. Jacob asks Santa "Are you really Santa or a helper?" Santa tells him that there are many helpers but that Jacob will have to decide what he believes. Jacob feels his beard, looks into his eyes and knows he is with Santa.

Santa wraps Jacob in a Santa-America HUG (our polar fleece scarf with mittens on the end). Santa makes sure Jacob knows that the HUG is a reminder that Santa's love is always with him. Santa and Jacob make plans for their next visit. Jacob has begun to smile. Santa knows that he has nurtured Jacob during this stressful time by bringing Love, Hope and Joy. They have forged a relationship that will last for years to come.

\* Editors Note. This is just a snapshot into a Santa visit and the tenderness that we deliver. The names have been changed for patient privacy.

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photo by Elizabeth McGonagle Graham

# IT'S MORE THAN A VISIT FROM SANTA... IT'S A RELATIONSHIP

Santa Ernest



I'm sure every Santa-America Santa has faced the question, "So what do you actually do when you visit a child?" Elf Cathy and I were recently asked this by a prospective donor. It solidified my thinking that our mission: *Bringing Love, Hope and Joy to special needs children and their families* is much more than a visit from Santa, it's a relationship with Santa.

Every visit from Santa-America either begins or strengthens a relationship with the child, family, support structure and caregivers. Santa and his elves are a powerful way to "connect the dots" as support forms around a child in need... ..a support relationship that continues for years.

We make no secret of the fact that we hold ourselves to the highest standards in our representation of Santa, our background investigations, volunteer affiliations with local hospices and hospitals, and our evolving training and symbolic gifts... .. we are more than a visit and always will be.

I know many of you enjoy motorcycling as a hobby. Hobbies are yet another way to engage a child and build relationship. The Elf Group, LLC is converting the motorcycle in the picture above into a sidecar rig for use at Santa-America events. Recently, I returned from a visit with a youngster who had been abandoned by his mother a year after her boyfriend shot him three times, "because he didn't want him around!" One of our strongest points of connection was my promise to give him a ride when the sidecar is installed. It's almost as good as a ride in Santa's sleigh! I encourage each of you to also use your interests and hobbies to engage a child and build a relationship. With Love, Hope and Joy.....and always remember..."Elf before Self!"

## HELP THE ELF!-ELF NITA

Hello, again, fellow "sleigh" mates! I can't believe it's almost the end of February. I spent most of the month in a flu haze but am glad to be back among the healthy. I have finally written all of the Santa's on our Santa Map and shared with you what we're doing in respect to my position and why we feel it's necessary to produce a hard file on each of you. I have met with many successes, but we still have a good many of you to hear from before I'm feeling really "good". To those of you who have responded, Thank You. I'm sure I can depend on those who haven't responded yet, to do so real soon. (Or, I'll just have to drop you a reminder email – bugging you again!!!) If I can help by making calls to your Hospice Volunteer Coordinators, I'd be happy to do that. Some of you listed your own personal website address along with your contact information when you were added to the Santa Map. We'd like to ask all our Santa's to provide a hyperlink to us – Santa-America, Inc. – on your website just as we list yours on our website. Some of you already have. I loved checking out your websites when I was using the Santa Map to write all of you. We also have an "I Support" Santa-America, Inc. button with the HTML code that you can convert to your site, you can download it from our site ([www.Santa-America.org/funding.htm](http://www.Santa-America.org/funding.htm)). Remember, don't hesitate to call or email if I can be of any help to all of your out there. HO! HO! HO!!!!



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## BEHIND THE RED SUIT

### Santa George C. "Dusty" Webb

#### Santa, tell us a little bit about yourself?

I spent 32 years in the Aerospace industry. In 1994, I "retired" and founded the Old West & Ye Olde World Living History Foundation. For 10 years, I ran the foundation with 17,500 members in all 50 states and 10 countries. We provided insurance and services for re-enactors, actors, producers, directors, event producers, events and much more. In 2004 the foundation lost its Insurance program. In 2005, I closed the doors in Cody Wyoming and moved back to California. I needed to redefine myself. I joined a production company and worked in the movie biz. It was fun work but hard to make a living. In 2007, I went back to work in the Aerospace Industry. In my career I have machined parts that I am proud to say, are on every Space Shuttle launched. I have built parts that are now on the moon, with the Lunar Excursion Module, and on Mars with the Mars Rover for JPL.

Last year, my sister's husband, Mickey was diagnosed with cancer. He died 3 months later. He was on hospice in LA. The day before I graduated from Hospice in San Diego, I got the phone call from my sister; Mickey was taking his last breaths. Shortly after the phone call, my brother-in-law and friend of 30 years passed on.

When I went to my last day of hospice training... they said, "Today you will experience your own death." They gave us 20 colored cards. We had to put something on the card that we cared about... family, accomplishments, friends, and possessions. Then they put on mood music and said, "Throw away 4 cards, today you discovered you have cancer. The training was to experience what a patient was going through at the end. For an hour they described what it was like to die from cancer. They had us throw away a card every time we got worse. Every detail was exactly what we had just gone through with Mickey. It hurt so badly because this was not just a drill to me. It was too real. We went through this hospice training to make us strong. Was I going to be strong enough?

The day after hospice training was Sunday. This was the day the firestorm came to San Diego. It was devastating to say the least. **Elf Nita** emailed me and asked me if I was in Danger. I emailed this response back... *Dear Elf Nita, Yes... I was in danger. I did not evac. I helped everyone else get out. The place I was living burned down. Fire on three sides as high as three Eucalyptus trees. I worked at the front gate of the Poway Rodeo Grounds for 3 days coordinating the evac of over 1000 horses. No time to sleep. It rained embers, ash and smoke. People lost their homes, their pets, livestock and horses. Next, I went to Del Mar Fair grounds and Race Track where we had sent 3500 evacuated horses. I told them I was a Wyoming Cowboy. I stayed three days and ran the feedlot. We took care of the horses. We bucked hay and shaving all day long. I am sore with blisters... but I am alive and I was rewarded... I adopted 2 little kittens. They were orphans. We are homeless together. I went to church last night to count my blessings.*

Visit the Santa-America website ([www.Santa-America.org/news.htm](http://www.Santa-America.org/news.htm)) to learn more about Santa-Dusty and his special visits.

Pictured below is Santa Dusty Webb with Olivia and twins Gianna and Grace, his first hospice family.



*Santa, We very much enjoyed your visit on Christmas morning. It was very special to have Olivia meet Santa Claus in person for the first time. Because of her serious illness and how difficult it is for us to bring her places she had never been able to see Santa until your visit...*

NEXT SPOTLIGHT: SANTA JOHN SCHEUCH

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

## MAKING HEADLINES?

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... we deliver Love, Hope and Joy to special needs children and their families throughout the year.

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.

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 the audio and visual media. **Santa Dave Jordan** (Rock Hill, SC) recently conducted an excellent interview on WBT 1110 AM out of Charlotte, NC. Santa Dave discussed the mission, purpose and direction of Santa-America with show host Stacey Sims. Santa Dave touched base with us at the North Pole before his interview to confirm the core message and talking points. Santa Dave not only conveyed our message but has aided us in developing more of a presence in the area. Stay tuned to our website for portions of the interview to be uploaded onto our site. KUDOS Santa Dave!

Although radio is typically "easier" don't rule out television. Throughout the year news anchors are looking for "community interest stories" and your commitment to spreading Love, Hope and Joy is impressive.

Your community needs to know of your involvement and support of Santa-America. Please share with us your local newspaper and reporter and we'll let them know of your support in Santa-America. Email your contacts to Elf Cathy at [CathyBarnette@Santa-America.org](mailto:CathyBarnette@Santa-America.org).

## SPECIAL SANTA VISITS



Santa-America would like to improve on our visit database this year. However, for us to be successful, we need your visit information. For those who have yet to complete your 2007 Visit Report Forms, please send them to Elf Cathy or Elf Nita. We know it is cumbersome to download the report from the SA website and are working to make it web interactive. In the meantime, please don't let your visits go undocumented. Remember to send pictures if available.

## SANTA RESOURCES

Santa-America has a number of new tools available to you! In addition to the first edition of the Santa-America Volunteer Sleigh Kit, we also have stickers and a beautiful new brochure. The Sleigh Kit and Brochure can be downloaded from the website at [www.Santa-America.org](http://www.Santa-America.org), go to Resources, or emailing the North Pole with a request. Please let us know of the special events you are participating in so we can send you weeble stickers.



# SANTA-AMERICA INITIATIVES

Santa-America has a number of ongoing programs to enhance and support our mission to deliver Love, Hope and Joy to our special needs children and their families...365 days a Year!



## MEDICAL PILOT STUDY

Santa-America has begun a medical clinical pilot study entitled *Psychosocial Factors in Treatment of Children with Cystic Fibrosis*. This study is evaluating the effect Santa Claus has on the physical and emotional well-being of children suffering from cystic fibrosis. This study, the first of its kind, has been approved by the University of South Alabama Medical School. **Santa Leon Lane** is conducting visits and phone calls with a number of families, encouraging treatment compliance and providing a supportive ear.

**Santa-America Child Abuse Prevention Committee...**Santa-America is the national leader in NCQA background checks (the same as a doctor and nurse). Our children are our utmost priority. Santa-America has a zero tolerance for any volunteer with a history of child abuse. In July 2007, the Santa-America Board of Advisors formed a special committee to review our procedures and create policies to take every practical step to ensure the utmost safety of our children and our volunteers.

**Weight Loss Reduction...**Santa-America has initiated a program to reduce the size of Santa by 25% in the next 15 years. In addition to being a major cause of Santa disability and early dying, obesity is a national epidemic with 19% of our children suffering from extreme weight issues. We will host a number of "weigh-ins" during regional gatherings to formally track our Santa's weight loss.

## SANTA-AMERICA HUG

Santa-America has moved to symbolic gifts that represent Love, Hope and Joy. 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. The pattern design is under final review and production is scheduled to begin in the next few months. Santas...this is just another reason we need to know about your special visits.

## THE ELF EXPERIENCE



"Elf Experience" is a community service program for high school juniors and seniors to accompany Santa as he visits our special children. Bayside Academy, (Daphne, AL) is the first school in the nation to launch this program. To learn more on building a program, contact Elf Cathy at [info@santa-america.org](mailto:info@santa-america.org).

## SANTA TO DO'S

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 the Santa-America traveling art show. Contact Elf Cathy or Elf Nita to schedule the exhibit in your area.

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 a Teen Elf Program.



# SANTA GATHERINGS

Santa-America is thrilled to see the emergence of Santa gatherings throughout the country. The regional meetings provide an exciting opportunity for Santa-America to strengthen our relationships with our Santas, as well as answer the detailed questions about our philosophy, activities and direction. These meetings also bring together Santas to support one another. It is that spirit of community and partnership that Santa-America wants to embrace.



We are tasked by our donors (and volunteers) to be wise stewards of our funds. Where we can, Santa-America wants to participate in all gatherings, whether they are get-togethers sponsored by an organization, or many of the emerging events that are inclusive to any Santa, Elf or Mrs. Claus. Many of these gatherings also support Santa-America by hosting raffles, etc. So, please make sure to keep us in mind as you become aware of area events.

We love and support all Santa associations. We remain focused on supporting our special needs children and their families by delivering our gifts of Love, Hope and Joy! Please contact the North Pole with questions.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March 2-Alabama Santa Gathering hosted by Santa Steve Whiting at (205) 685-0558.

May 30-June 1-Palm Tree Santa gathering in St. Augustine, FL. Contact Santa Bob Elkin for more information or visit [www.palmtreesantas.com](http://www.palmtreesantas.com).

**Summer 2009 Santa-America Training Conference...details to follow.**

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



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