

# WEEBLE WORDS

Volume 2, Issue 1, January 2008



## 2007 YEAR IN REVIEW

Santa-America's core mission has been strengthened by expanding our volunteer team to include Santa, Mrs. Claus and Teen Elves. Our new Santa recruits are joining at an average rate of 2 per month. Our Teen Elf Program has emerged as an integral component of the team, useful in building deeper community relationships and developing a sense of civic responsibility.

The Santa-America Pilot Clinical Trial is underway with the USA Healthcare System. The study provides potential leverage for strengthening SA's role within NHPCO, and an emerging role as "pediatric crisis" contributors through special Santa-centric CME (continuing medical education) accredited training for healthcare professionals.

Operational duties and donor funding is led by a professional staff. Our Administrative Director has significantly increased volunteer compliance and communications. Our Executive Director is building and fostering relationships, identifying potential funding sources and coordinating emerging national PR media program. Highlights include a new SA brochure, and the website under its 2<sup>nd</sup> major revision.

Significant time spent developing SA internally: Strategic Plan, Operations Plan, and Fund-raising Plan to drive efforts. Developed Santa Sleigh Kit, electronic newsletter and "suitable print copy" for Santa correspondence as well as developed clear policies on per diem eligibility criteria and guidelines.

Santa-America has identified a number of symbolic gifts: sleigh bells, Angel Books, HUGS, weeble shirts and weeble stickers. Centralized sourcing is underway and distribution will be managed to define and support a consistent local Santa visit.

South Central region leads the way in supporting Santa-America and our sustainable donor relationships are growing with foundations, businesses, other NFP and individuals. Key relationships underway include medical alliances, symphonies, Christmas tree farms, rotary clubs, and public gardens.

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

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photo by Elizabeth  
McGonagle Graham

## A Message From the President Santa Ernest

Another Holiday Season is over and the list of Santa America accomplishments is impressive. Even as December came to a close, Santa-America continued to visit our special needs children. YOU have truly made Santa-America a 365/24/7 Santa service organization!!!



Something else is happening to America's largest volunteer Santa organization, our individual roles, capabilities and responsibilities are becoming more clearly defined. For sure, we all are dedicated to the same mission: "Serving our special needs children and their families in hospice, with chronic pediatric illnesses or suffering from post traumatic stress disorder." Our commitment and visibility are now spreading across communities, as we begin to enroll and train "Teen Elves" to join Santa on his visits. Our association with medical and hospice professionals is stronger and more credible as Santa brings Love, Hope and Joy to one child at a time... and now year after year!

The total of all our spirit and dedication = a value rich (and as we are setting out to prove in our first clinical trial pilot study; HEALING) service that can unite 3-4 generations in your community all year long!

2008 promises to be a year of tremendous growth and refinement at local, regional, national and international levels, all with one goal always in mind.... serving our special children and their families. For us it is always, "ELF BEFORE SELF!"

Cathy, Nita and I look forward to visiting with you at the various regional meetings taking place across the USA. We'll be spreading the word about our mission and recruiting to expand our network of affiliated Santas and elves. A huge Santa hug to every member of Santa-America. You are very special folks!

### HELP THE ELF! NEWS FROM ELF NITA

Here we are deep into January 2008 and I sure hope each of you had a very Merry Christmas and send my best wishes for a wonderful New Year!! It has been a great pleasure working with and for you all since I joined Santa-America. I have written to all of you except our Santa's in Georgia and Florida. But I'll get that done in the next few weeks. Let me say "Thanks" to those of you who have responded to my email regarding compliancy and the development of our system of files on each of you. Thanks, especially, to those of you who have sent me all those things that I have asked for. It is so important to our organization to have a complete file for each of you, with application, back ground information, completion of training certificates and TB test results. It strengthens our credibility in the medical and hospice communities of which we serve. I know I can depend on those who have not responded yet or completed the process to do so, now that we have gotten through your extremely busy Christmas season. I'll be emailing those of you that I haven't heard from, lighting that fire in hopes of hearing from you soon.



Don't forget to send in those stories and pictures of visits during this past season. I know there are many and we are all tired of looking at Santa Ernest's and Santa Bill's pictures. We want and need those from outside "Daphne, AL". So, send those to me and I'll make sure that they get on our website. Please don't forget to call if I can ever be of help to you.

So, again, with all my best wishes in 2008 and of course, Love, Hope and Joy for all the children we serve.

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.  
Besides...aren't  
you all tired of  
looking at Santa  
Ernest and  
Santa Bill?

# BEHIND THE RED SUIT

Santa Leon Lane

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

I am blessed with a wonderful wife, Janice, to whom I've been married 24 years and a beautiful 11 year old daughter. I also have 6 adult children and am a grandfather and great grandfather. I spent 40 years in the corporate sector working with the Coca-Cola Company. My last assignment was VP of customer marketing in Korea. I retired in 2000 and became a partner in a company called Coffee Legends. I am currently a real estate investor with no transactions due to market conditions. My second job keeps me most busy...I serve as a driver for my daughter. Our daily drive is a 90 mile round trip to school. In addition to being Santa, I enjoy classic cars.

## What was your first experience as Santa Claus?

It was over 30 years ago. I was much younger at the time and being in the corporate world could not have the "Santa look." So, I began to make telephone calls to children of friends and added children with illnesses and shut-ins.

## How did you decide to become Santa?

When I left the corporate world I grew my hair long and a beard. My wife said I looked like Santa and suggested I don the red suit and become Santa... I initially become involved in fundraisers to support children and battered women. I had a few private appearances but was most involved on the charitable side... and still prefer that today.

## How did you find Santa-America and when did you join?

My daughter attends Bayside Academy in Daphne, AL. The Headmaster, Tom Johnson, told me I look like I would make a good Santa. Once I told him I do that work, Tom then told me about Santa-America, that he is on the board, and suggested I talk with Santa Ernest. I went knocking on doors and after one wrong house I found Santa Ernest and we had a great talk about SA, it's mission and my potential role.

## What is your favorite story as Santa?

I feel like it should be a personal visit but it was actually a voice gig... I was in Seoul, Korea. The American Women's Club (although multi-national) decided to sponsor and coordinate phone calls from Santa. One of the children I was asked to call was a little German boy who was on the cusp of believe age. I called equipped with his personal information and told him this is Santa calling. The boy was bilingual but chose to respond in German. Now Santa is supposed to speak every language. I thought for a minute and answered in English. Fortunately, the answer happened to be correct. The young boy asked me "why aren't you speaking to me in German?" Santa told him that the American Women's Club asked me to call. That made sense and we proceeded with a wonderful call. He was a believer!

## Anything else you'd like to share?

I have the highest regard for Santa-America and our mission. There is really nothing more important than our kids. I feel privileged to be the Santa for the medical pilot study and look forward to working with those special children.



NEXT SPOTLIGHT: SANTA DUSTY WEBB, we think....

# BELIEVE 365 TRAVELING ART SHOW

This past December, Santa-America and the Eastern Shore Art Center (ESAC) united to share with the community, Believe! Area artists put on canvas their interpretation of Santa and the gifts of Love, Hope and Joy. Special thanks to Elf Nancy Raia! Nancy worked with kids from the Regional School for the Deaf and Blind as well as others to share this gift with the world. Visit the Santa-America website to download the art show pdf and see the impressive submissions by a diverse array of artists. Santa-America is exploring the feasibility of creating Christmas Cards out of several of these images.



## GLIMPSES FROM 2007



*Santa John, Thank you so much for creating and giving this memory to our entire family and community.*

*Rhonda, Kansas City*



# ATTENTION SANTA!



**Santa, have you thought about what it means to be the face of Santa-America in your local community?** As you know, it takes tremendous heart, compassion and commitment to be part of Santa-America. As Santa Ernest likes to say, you are the Navy Seals of Santas!

For Santa-America to continue to grow, individuals, business, and local communities need to know of our special work...and **you are the local face!** Santa-America encourages those who are comfortable speaking in front of groups to work with their local chamber of commerce to find avenues to “be the face of Santa-America.” Santa-America can work with you to develop the proper presentation for the audience, etc.

Area events are an effective way to let the community know about Santa-America and the role you play in the community. Special events are an effective method to help support Santa-America and raise awareness.

Contact Elf Cathy for ways to raise Santa-America's visibility in your community. It takes a team to make things happen and you are needed! Consider contacting your local chamber of commerce and let them know about Santa-America. Identify local service clubs like the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Lions Club, etc. and ask them to support Santa-America. Elf Cathy looks forward to your call or email!

## SANTA & THE ELF EXPERIENCE

MOTTO: ELF BEFORE SELF



The Santa-America “Elf Experience” is a community service program for high school juniors and seniors to accompany Santa as he visits children and families in hospice, with chronic pediatric illness or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder throughout the year.

Bayside Academy, (Daphne, AL) is the first school in the nation to launch a “Teen Elves” community service program. The Elf Program is a playful but serious way to instill the values of community service and build responsibility. To learn more on building a program in your community, visit our website at [www-santa-america.org](http://www-santa-america.org), or contact Elf Cathy at 251.379.0462 or [cathybarnette@santa-america.org](mailto:cathybarnette@santa-america.org).

### ELF BENEFITS

Selflessness.....better to give than to receive...

Responsibility....not a “one time” project

Leadership at a higher level

Commitment to value rich service: Love, Hope, Joy

Unites 3 generations in service

Builds relationships within community

## 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.



# 2007 Special Supporters

There are so many others to whom we need to thank! Every dollar donated helps us deliver Love, Hope and Joy to our special needs children and their families. Your support is greatly appreciated.



**JEWELERS FOR CHILDREN**  
A GIFT OF LOVE FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

**Monte L. Moorer  
Foundation**

**The Elf Group, LLC**



**Fish River Trees**

**Point Clear Rotary Club**

*Alliance to the Medical Society of Mobile County*



## Honorary Elves of Distinction

The following individuals are honored as *Elves of Distinction*. Their lives embody the vision and mission of Santa America: to spread unconditional Love, Hope and Joy to the special children of the world.

*Darcy I. Berger*  
*Ernest F. Berger*  
*Mary Catherine Barnette*  
*Gerald Bell*  
*Lt. Scott Bidwell*  
*Chancellor Bradley Byrne*  
*Thomas Byrne*  
*Bernice Haws and Win Byrne*  
*George Casey*  
*Christine Coleman*  
*Jeffrey W. Comment*  
*Dr. Albert Corte*  
*Elizabeth Corte*  
*Richard Deacon*  
*Jennifer Dean*  
*Jeraldine Dearmon*  
*Joan Demeranville*  
*Jerry Depute*  
*James McArdle*  
*Dr. Michael Dreyer*  
*Dorothy Earnest*  
*Gerasamus Crassas*  
*Mary A. Hamell*  
*Donald Hathaway*  
*Michael and Nora Heaton*  
*Mary Jane Jones*

*Dote Kretzer*  
*Peggy LeBlanc*  
*Evelyn Lockwood*  
*Frank and Dorothy Mancini*  
*Steve and Sandra Mannhard*  
*Captain Leo Rene Marcoulier*  
*Thomas McCann*  
*Larissa McCoy*  
*Amy Meek*  
*Virginia Mitchell*  
*Hilda Monago*  
*John Day Peake*  
*Robert G. Raines*  
*John Scheuch*  
*Edward Francis Sitarz*  
*Vic and Fran Sitmer*  
*Charles and Nan Schimmel*  
*William Scourtes*  
*Senator Richard Shelby*  
*Curtis Starr*  
*Frank and Michelle Statler*  
*Warren and Katharine Tucker*  
*Charles Urisko*  
*Howard and Ceann Wachter*  
*Phillip Webb*  
*Bill and Lynn Wells*

### Santa-America Directors

*Ernest L. Berger*  
*Aimee Crassas*  
*Pat Horgan*  
*Tom Johnson*



### Advisory Board

*Cathy S. Barnette*  
*Nita Mickwee*  
*Carl Anderson, PhD*  
*Gary Casey*  
*Tim Connaghan*  
*John Degel*  
*Bob Elkin*  
*Elizabeth Graham*  
*Jim Pollard*  
*Paul Raines*  
*John Scheuch*  
*Jason Stewart*  
*David Shoemaker*



## Our Special Santas Lost..

**Santa Jim McArdle**  
**Santa Floyd Likins**

Our love goes out to the families of Santa Jim McArdle (GA) and Santa Floyd Likins (AL) as they mourn the loss of these incredible men.

## SANTA AMERICA PER DIEM POLICY (Effective January 2008)

We are thrilled to watch the number of Santas grow throughout the country. We are grateful for your heart and compassion in serving our special children and their families. To help offset your costs, Santa-America has worked with the Internal Revenue Service to identify a per diem reimbursement policy. Although your time is valuable and we appreciate all visits on behalf of Santa America, not all visits as Santa qualify for the per diem reimbursement.



The visit must be pre-scheduled by a local hospice, doctor, social worker or special needs educator and occur with children and/or their siblings on whom information has been gathered. Visits for Santa America clinical trials qualify for the per diem. Public relations events may qualify for per diem if assigned by Santa America.

A detailed documented Santa visit report must be completed and submitted within 30 days of your visit. We are working to make this form available to complete online.

Daily reimbursements are \$50.00. Overnight visits are reimbursable at the amount of \$120.00. In every case, other children and families may be involved. Each per diem includes visits per day not per case.

## 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 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!