

CHRISTMAS

Connections

SUMMER
**20
23**
ISSUE

Profiles of Members
**Who Have
SERVED**

Preview of
MEMPHIS

Meet Music City
SANTA

**CHRISTMAS
In July**

**ZACH'S
TOY CHEST**





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THE PERFECT
SANTAS**



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A message from
**SANTA STEPHEN
ARNOLD**
IBRBS President



We hope you are as excited as we are that we have found a group of great volunteers to get the IBRBS' member newsletters back on track for regular publication. Our hearty thanks to the Newsletter Committee for their concerted efforts on behalf of the membership!

As many of you know, we are about to enter our annual member renewal period. Your 2022-23 membership expires on September 30, 2023, but we've been offering early renewal since April 1 of this year. Too, we will be announcing the 2023-24 Individual Entertainers' Liability Insurance package in the next couple weeks and we believe that, because of our outstanding track record, we likely will not experience any policy rate increases – for the fourth year in a row! Too, we are still negotiating on a new rider package that we hope to release at the same time as the insurance package – something we know you have all been asking about. We will also continue to offer one of the most comprehensive, quality background checks available, still from IntelliCorp.

Have you visited the ISC2024 Memphis event recap and registration website? The three full days of workshops, activities, expansive vendor showcase, and exciting events, including a Christmas Parade down historic Beale Street, scheduled for April 25 through 28, is already selling well. Many of you have already made reservations with the host hotel, the Sheraton Downtown Memphis. A valid credit card can reserve your room without any advance charges to your card. Use this link to take a look at the schedule at the ISC2024 Memphis registration website and make your plans now for what will be one of the largest gatherings in the Christmas Community ever.

Thanks to all of you for your support of IBRBS, the world's largest organization of professional Santas, Mrs Clauses, active spouses, and Associates. We continue to see membership expand by word of mouth and reputation, including a soon-to-be new Affiliated Chapter in the UK. Do you want to help us grow? Applications for openings in the IBRBS Board of Directors will begin September 1, 2023 with elections held February 1-15, 2024.

Have a blessed Fall and Winter Seasons and be safe.

Santa Stephen Arnold
IBRBS President/CEO



Editor In Claus



W hew! The baby is here! Birthing, this version of *Christmas Connections* was truly a journey! There are not enough words of gratitude to express to the legions of Santas, Mrs. Clauses, Christmas Performers and lovers of all things Christmas who stepped up to encourage the process. What started out as a dream in the early Spring envisioning an issue filled with salutes to 'Christmas in July' themed events, was reimagined to creating an issue that would recap summer outings and service projects; profiles of members who have served our country; a preview of the upcoming ISC2024 Convention; and a photographic tour of some of the most iconic and beloved Memphis attractions through the lens of local photojournalists.

As stories were being pitched and photo shoots were scheduled, suddenly my son was deployed to our surprise. I am still in a daze somewhat, but I am thankful for his dedication to serve after three years recovering from catastrophic injuries. His deployment gave me more meaning to how I volunteered my time.

This issue was designed to intrigue potential members, engage followers, ignite a sparkle in the eyes of our faithful members, give us momentum to think about the possibilities for the future of Christmas Performers, and attract event sponsors and advertisers that are in alignment with the mission of IBRBS; To

keep Christmas magic in the hearts of children of all ages by creating an International Christmas community.

This issue of *Christmas Connections* was created purposefully to uplift and give us joyful energy! And, it builds off past issues that shared good news, chapter events, Santa and Mrs. Claus profiles, and regional storylines. Future issues will include lessons from experts to inspire us to be the best Christmas Performers, year - round. Since I live in the Nashville Area, I found a great Santa from our market for the cover photo. Thank you, Stephen Kiern, Music City Santa!

As we are preparing for the best season yet, let us remember to ***“uphold the magical spirit and meaning of Christmas, promote the joy of giving, respect the diversity of Christmas traditions throughout the world, and uphold the positive image of Christmas performers.”*** We are in this together!

Sincerely,
Genma Holmes, Ms. Santa

P. S. Do you have thoughts on this issue or have ideas for future stories? Drop us a note at Newsletter@IBRBS.org

The Party of the Year

is less than 12 months Away!



All IRBBS members are invited to the 3-day ISC2024 in Memphis, TN

April 25-28, 2024. The much-anticipated event will be held at the Renasant Convention Center located at 255 N Main St, Memphis, TN 38103 in the heart of downtown Memphis.

The ISC2024 Committee would like to express a special thank you to the more than 200 early supporters of ISC2024 Memphis. Final details are nearing completion, and many vendors and workshop presenters have requested participation.

This could be the largest Christmas Convention ever, setting new standards for future ISC events! The Downtown Sheraton Hotel in Memphis, TN will be the host hotel. As has been our history, our brothers and sisters in the Christmas Community who may not be members are also welcome to join our IBRBS members at this terrific event.



This will be the first ever ISC event to convene for three days of exciting camaraderie and fun, presenting 45 learning workshops, a huge and ever-popular Vendor Showcase, our wonderful Sponsors' Area, receptions, awards, celebrations, and world class entertainment. We are also pleased to announce that all meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) are included for Friday and Saturday, as well as a buffet breakfast served in the hotel on Sunday morning before the last workshops and the Parade.

On Thursday, get to know Memphis by visiting many tourists' favorite venues and historic sites. Dine on your own at many restaurants lining Main and Beale Street, and several Concierge hotels. As a separate ticketed event with limited availability, we have rented two Mississippi River Boats, each holding about 150 people, for a 2-hour river cruise, a buffet BBQ dinner, entertainment, and a cash bar. The Island Queen is ADA-accessible, with most activities as well as dinner presented on the main deck. Like ISC in Atlanta, we are planning top-notch entertainment for Friday evening's dinner. And our Saturday night entertainment will be a charity benefit concert by talented Rock & Roll tribute artists performing as Dolly Parton, Kenny Rogers, and Elvis Presley! The net proceeds going to St Jude Children's Research Hospital. We have arranged a small number of rooms for those wishing to arrive on Wednesday, April 24th.

Thursday, April 25th is the official arrival day, and the Convention starts early Friday morning. If you wish to stay through Sunday night, you can attend the Sunday morning Christmas Parade down historic Beale Street! Oh, what fun!

We look forward to seeing you in Memphis at ISC2024!

Regards,
Howie Graham
Events Officer, IBRBS Chairman of the Board, and IBRBS
Elected Director
Stephen P. Arnold
IBRBS President/CEO, IBRBS Elected Director
ISC2024 Committee

SANTA DAY

AT CASTLE NOEL



Santa Day 2023 was a huge success. Santas, Santa Nantas, and holiday characters from 10 states joined Castle Noel to for the march from Castle Noel to the historic Media Square gazebo on a beautiful Saturday morning during May, Military Appreciation Month! It was a day devoted to smiling, singing, and shenanigans! In conjunction with Armed Forces Day, this event paid homage to our veterans.

In addition to celebrating Santa Day 2023, Dana and Mark Claus celebrated the 10th Anniversary of Castle Noel! We cannot wait to see you there in 2025.



Santa Nana



October 12-14, 2023: Colorado Springs, CO
February 2-4, 2024: San Antonio, TX (at our collaborative event with SatBobs – North Pole Cornerstones)
May 2-4, 2024: Birch Run, MI

A different and unexpected point of view for holiday education for ALL!



Deanna Golden and Judi Broderick bring out the FABULOUS in you, built on the legacy and vision of Santa Nana. Education for ALL, from a lady's point of view.

What Clauses are saying

- "This was a phenomenal class."
- "I hope you know that the two of you are making history."
- "As someone that believes in sharing knowledge, it was a pleasure to sit for two days and observe two people that are as inspirational as Deanna and Judith, watching the excitement they created as they shared information... I enjoyed myself immensely and learned much all at the same time. Deanna and Judith did an exceptional job in team teaching."

SantaNana.com

NPCornerstones.com

Facebook.com/groups/SantaNana





Santa Family Reunion



Save the Date!

The text 'Save the Date!' is written in a large, dark green, cursive font. A red Santa hat with white fur trim and a white pom-pom is positioned to the left of the word 'Save'. The text is surrounded by several small, yellow, starburst-like decorative elements.

March 29 – April 1, 2025
Gatlinburg, TN

Registration Opens May 13, 2024!

SantaFamilyReunion.com



CHRISTMAS IN JULY CHAPTER MEETINGS

To many, Christmas in July is their once-a-year chance to celebrate all the things they love about Christmas: the fun, the family, the parties, the cozy fireplaces.

Now, think about all the things everyone loves about summer: the fun, the family, the parties, the cozy firepits.

Replace the inside fires with outside fires and you have Christmas in July, a “half Christmas” celebration that just makes Christmas jolly.

Thank you to all of the chapters who met in July that sent photos of their summer activities and posted their events on social media!



SANTA

3 'SECRETS' TO A **SUPER SUCCESSFUL** SANTA BUSINESS

Be More Confident in
What You Say, Do & How
You Build Your Business

**Free
Webinar**



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS SANTA DAN?

IBRBS Chapters and members celebrated Christmas in July in a variety of ways! From meetings filled with fun and fellowship to toy drives to events to help aid their local communities to honoring the men and women who have served or is serving in the military, Santas and Mrs. Clauses from all walks of life seemed to make this year's Christmas in July memorable.

And then there is Santa Dan! His Christmas in July was not one event or parade but a month-long festival of ALL things Christmas that had friends and newfound fans following him on social media and wondering Where in the World is Santa Dan today?





His appearances at numerous community events were rightly called a “tour!” His outings captured the essence of Santa and gave us a glimpse into a modern-day Claus who oozes gleeful energy.

Santa Dan’s Christmas in July Tour felt as if he was the official Ambassador of Cheer and Merry in South Carolina. His photos gave us laughs as we eagerly waited for the next post. From ball parks to car shows to motorcycle sleigh rides to singing with the band to cooing with babies and petting the poochies, Santa Dan’s Christmas in July showed us the versatility of being a Christmas Performer and how to have fun in character even during the summertime!



SANTA TOM Goes Ashore



Tom Cortemeglia
“Santa of Middle Tennessee”

The International Hall of Fame 2021 Inductee Tom Cortemeglia is admired by many in the Christmas Community. Gracious, kind, and a servant leader, Tom shares his knowledge without hesitation. Many new to the Christmas Community may be unaware that Tom served in the U.S. Navy for 41 years, from 1961 until his retirement in 2002. After a fulltime career sailing the seas and docking at ports around the world, Tom came ashore to begin new adventures as Santa Claus. It was then that Tom “grew up” to be Santa.

He spent his first decade as Santa with Naturally Santa Inc. working at numerous shopping malls around the country. In 2012, he joined World Wide Photo, and began providing his unique, professional Santa persona to visitors to the premier mall in Frisco, Texas.

In 2016, Santa Tom decided to stay close to home and gave the greater Middle Tennessee families and businesses an opportunity to have memorable experiences with a wonderful Santa. He provided family photo sessions, home visits, government events and corporate parties and activities.

Tom is a member of many Santa groups. He is natural leader and he has mentored many Santas and Mrs. Clauses on the business of being a professional at all times.

Tom excelled at being Santa but he also built a successful business for Santas and Mrs. Clauses. Tom opened Santa’s Clauset in 2004, a quality Santa accessories supply business for many years. Santa Clauset has been a fixture at numerous Santa Claus Conventions around the country. Santa’s Clauset has been delivering unique, value-packed Santa and Mrs. Claus accessories to the Santa Claus Community.

In 2022, Tom decided to retire, again, and passed the baton to a Santa Claus and Mama Claus who he met years earlier. 2023 ushered in new owners of Santa Clauset, Wade and Scarlett Coffeman, who have been mentored and encouraged by Tom to become Christmas Performers and the new owners of Santa Clauset.

Since Tom and his bride sailed off into the sunset for a second retirement, he has not hung up his stockings completely. Tom can still be found sitting in vendor halls at Santa conventions assisting shoppers, attending IBRBS Middle Tennessee chapter meetings, sharing advice to new members or giving big belly laughs to encourage others.



Santa Wade Finds Joy

I met Tom Cortmeglia when he was my wife's Santa. Over the years, we established a friendship. We talked often about life after my retirement from the Military and the possibility of me being a professional Santa. He suggested that if I was serious, I should attend the Charles W. Howard Santa school, the oldest Santa School. After 22 years of service in the Tennessee National Guard, I decided to find my joy and become a Santa. My wife and I attended the Charles W. Howard School and who was there? Tom! Due to COVID, I had not seen him in two years.

We struck up a conversation and he mentioned that he would be turning eighty and he was going to retire and sell his business, Santa's Clauset. I was thinking there would be fifty people attending but to my surprise the school had two hundred Santas and Mrs. Clauses.

I applied what I learned to my first true season as a real bearded Santa in 2022. The joy that I found putting on the red suit was like nothing I have ever experienced. Seeing light in a child's eye, their wonderment, the excitement, and the endless love were the opposite emotions for a soldier like me who has faced multiple deployments. I loved watching the parents' faces as you could see them traveling back in time and beginning to relive their childhood Christmases. I loved answering their questions and continuing their belief in the season.

My Inaugural season as Santa Wade was busy with home visits and corporate events. One of the most touching visits was to a memory center where I was told by the staff that one of the residents had been non-responsive and nonverbal for nine months. When I met her, I bent down and touched her hand and gently asked, "How are you"? She slowly turned her head and spoke softly, "Santa." This was the first word she had communicated in months. Her family's eyes filled with tears. And joy. Santa brings the child out in all of us. It is a privilege to wear this suit.





SANTASCLAUSET.ORG

Christmas Performer Workshops

Christmas Performer Workshops (CPW) is about helping you bring your performing skills to the next level, to help you develop your own unique offerings, and save you time on your journey as an "A-List" Performer.

Often Imitated
Never Duplicated

**Are you ready to take your
Christmas journey to the next level?**

Special:
Available to
book for
February
2024!

North Pole Radio
Mar 8-10
South Burlington, VT
**CPW Performing
Fundamentals**

Early Feb - SoCal
**CPW Team at FORBS
Annual Santa Reunion**

Apr 25-28
ISC Memphis, TN
**CPW Team of
Instructors at ISC**

MAPS
Jun 6-7
Michigan (TBD)
**CPW Advanced
Performing: Storytelling
and Character Work**

2024
Schedule

Hosting Workshops

CPW teams up with our Hosting Groups and shares profits, which then can be invested in more training, worthy causes, and more. Each workshop is tailored for your community. CPW Workshop Alumni can purchase a CPW Training Deck and can join the free, on-going training in the Alumni group.

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**CPW Advanced
Performing: Storytelling
and Character Work**

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Late Aug
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ChristmasPerformerWorkshops.com



SANTA CARL

LEARNS TO DANCE

I was born in Oak Park Illinois and lived on the west side of Chicago for my first formidable 14 years. Listening to songs from the 50's as well as the blues, and I especially loved the Motown sound! That was so special. This was a daily affair on my pocket-sized transistor radio. I still so enjoy those sounds.

Christmas was always a special time for my family and me. We always had lights on the outside of the house, (those big 9-watt bulbs), and there would always be drives through the neighborhoods that really pulled together at that special time of the year with every house being lit up. Entire blocks had large, illuminated letters. One would be placed in front of each house, spelling out saying's like "Candy Cane Lane" You could literally feel the spirit of Christmas in the air.



Our tree was always bought ahead of time but was put up on Christmas eve when it was time for the family to decorate it, after my Dad put on the, again, large 7 watt bulbs. Very dangerous by today's standards but oh so Beautiful.

I married young at 18 and started a family right away, having 3 children in relatively short order. The Christmas tradition I learned in my youth continued and was passed on to my children who totally embrace it today.

Somewhere along the way I started growing a beard, although it was very dark in color and not very popular at work at that time. As time progressed, the Children left the nest so to speak, and my beard began to turn a much lighter color. I began to get comments about looking "Santa like".

I took the leap and purchased a Santa suit; the best money could buy from Party City and I thought I looked pretty darn good! I realized how much I had to learn when I attended my first Santa convention, the 2018 ISC in Denver, Colorado where I was surrounded by 500 Santa's who really had their game going on.

At ISC, I learned so much in our breakout sessions which led to my attending numerous "Santa Claus Schools" and the learning curve continues. I learned to properly style my beard as well as picking up on the performing arts end of the spectrum which really helped grow my Santa persona. Working with special needs and the elderly are especially rewarding endeavors to me.

As time flies by, I have only continued to grow my portrayal as well as the Christmas spirit in my heart. I live to this day by the phrase "be nice, be kind" and pass that message along as often as possible.

I have evolved to being very busy from October through Christmas bringing what I hope is joy to all those who I meet through Holiday gatherings, those events being businesses Christmas parties, local tree lightings,

photographers, home visits and such.

This year, I have been asked to do "Summer Santa" engagements which included dance lessons. This is a new look for me. Red shorts, Christmas and Santa themed Hawaiian shirts, red and white striped socks, red shoes, fake snowballs for summer snowball fights, the list keeps growing and the delivery trucks keep coming!

To always have the Christmas spirit in your heart is an indescribable joy. "Keep the Christmas spirit strong all year long" is truly a rule that I live by.

I cannot imagine where my journey will take me as I progress, grow, and age, but I look forward to it and am up for the task at hand.



North Pole Cornerstones



North Pole Cornerstones Inaugural Session

San Antonio - February 2-4, 2024

CLAUS NIGHT ON THE RIVER WALK - Saturday DINNER (Each paying own tab).
"ONLY meal not included with tuition."

What's the Cost?

\$450 per person

We offer an installment plan to help spread out the cost.

Marriott

Northwest

3233 NW Loop
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210-377-3900

Hotel Rate

\$149 ++

**Includes
Breakfast**

What's Included?

- Full program Friday – Sunday
- Access to Vendor Room
- Friday Dinner
- Saturday Evening Cruise at the Famous San Antonio River Walk
- Take-home Participant Book
- Sunday Graduation Banquet
- Saturday and Sunday Lunches

VISIT: npccornerstones.com

For information on how to register, make payment, about our cornerstones and your NPC Team, Bob, Deanna, Judi, Krissi, Rex, and Scott.

12th Annual Ice Cream Social



Nothing like traditions in the Christmas Community! And, there is nothing like gathering for patriotic celebrations in July. And, there's National Ice Month during one of the hottest Julys on record. Bring all the Patriotic traditions, ice cream in a variety of flavors and bunting flags galore, and you will find Santa Jim Dyer and Ruth Ann hosting the Triangle Santa Buddies' Ice Cream Social. Summer 2023 marked the 12th Anniversary of Santa Dyer and Mrs. Claus' ice cream social! What a joyful time of fellowship and camaraderie before the busy holiday season begins!

ERIC AND MOE ELLIOTT

The Claus Couple



Eric R. Elliott was born in Cleveland, Ohio and raised in Baton Rouge, LA. where he graduated from Capitol High School. He joined the United States Army in August 1988. After serving sixteen deployments, eight permanent changes of assignment, performing in numerous duty positions, he retired in August 2015.

Moe R. Elliott was born in San Antonio, Texas and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio where she graduated from Colerain High School. A Gold Star daughter, Moe joined the United States Air Force in November 1994. The two of them met while on deployment in February 2002 and married three years later. After eight permanent changes of assignment, performing in numerous duty positions, she retired in December 2014.



Celebrating Christmas has always been an Elliott Family tradition. In 2007, Eric first donned the Santa suit while home from deployment. In 2019, Moe initiated what is called a “Santa Sighting” throughout adjoining area neighborhoods. She shared with followers that Santa and Mrs. Claus would be taking a short break on a certain date, time, location and would be available to say hello and take pictures before heading off to make The Claus Couple’s deliveries.

During COVID, a fellow veteran needed a Santa for his business’ first Christmas marketplace in an adjacent town. The Claus Couple sent in a photo and the rest is history.

They were Santa and Mrs. Claus for the 2020 and 2021 holiday seasons. In 2021, The Claus Couple were invited to an elementary school. They had a blast and the children loved it. At one point during their visit, they were surrounded six rows deep with children playful jostling to hug the enduring couple. The teacher took to her walkie talkie to call in a “code red”! “The children have surrounded Santa and Mrs. C,” she said fondly to the delights of the children and the adult.

Since their first two seasons, The Claus Couple started receiving requests for appearances from around the country. They soon realized they went from hobby to business quickly! They wanted to ensure that their number one rule of honoring the suit stayed intact, while being covered legally, by providing insurance and background checks for their clients. They joined international, state, and local Christmas organizations all in the month of February 2022. They have spent numerous days and hours perfecting their craft. Eric shared, “We are so grateful for all the love and support from the Santa community, and the comradery reminds us of our military family.” Moe states that “Now that we are retired, we have had the opportunity to not only serve out state and local communities but to serve our military community.” via holiday extravaganzas, dinners for deploying soldiers, luncheons, home visits and daycares, and virtual visits all while spreading holiday cheer and love”.



Graceland/Memphis Travel



Renasant Convention Center/Memphis Travel



ZACH'S TOY CHEST

North Carolina Friends of Santa Board members Joe Slifer and Jim Youker met with Holly Schwab of Zach's Toy Chest to donate a carload of toys to children fighting cancer and childhood illness. The North Carolina Friends of Santa donations was to show children and their families love from Santas' heart not only on Christmas Eve, but every day throughout the year.

The Origins of Zach's Toy Chest (ZTC)

The Schwab family founded ZTC after their oldest son Zachary's cancer diagnosis in 2008. He had a form of childhood cancer called Neuroblastoma. Neuroblastoma is a solid tumor cancer that begins in the nerve tissue of the neck, chest, abdomen, or pelvis but usually originates in the abdomen in the tissue of the adrenal gland. It usually affects children under five years old. The Schwabs were truly fortunate to catch Zach's cancer early during a sick visit to his pediatrician for sniffles.



Zachary was just shy of 10 months old when the family received the devastating news. In March 2008, surgeons attempted to remove his tumor – but could not because of its size and location. Zachary had chemotherapy at the outpatient center, the Valvano Day Hospital, at Duke Children's Hospital in North Carolina. This is when his mother Holly noticed the lack of activities for kids during their treatment. And that is where the idea of ZTC was planted!

Zachary had his second surgery on June 26, 2008, a month after finishing chemo. He had a much faster recovery time after most of his tumor was removed. He continued to make rapid progress and had his final surgery to remove his central line on September 18, 2008. The family was over the moon with Zach's health improving and there were no signs of active cancer cells.



In the beginning, ZTC goals were to provide toys to children receiving cancer treatments to help pass the time and make their day a little brighter. ZTC's mission was to help them focus on fun and play – not cancer and not the hospital. But through the years, ZTC has grown exponentially, and is now able to provide toys to both hospitalized patients and out-patient areas of Duke, UNC, WakeMed and Maynard Children's Hospitals on a year-round basis. This major milestone of ZTC is important because all kids at the hospitals receive toys as their reward for being courageous as they face adversity. ZTC will ALWAYS prioritize childhood cancer kids first to stay true to the foundation's roots, but ZTC is overjoyed to help all kids be kids thanks to the support it receives from organizations like IBRBS chapter, North Carolina Friends of Santa. To achieve these goals, the hospitals ensure the pediatric oncology areas are always given priority with new toys – then other areas are provided with toys.



ZTC is the only organization in North Carolina that provides new toys to the hospitals January through December. ZTC is not seasonal because kids are not just sick during the holidays. Thanks to the continued support from everyone, ZTC will continue to grow and keep bringing joy, one toy at a time!

Santa Ops

Larry G. Carmon, was born in Gallatin, Tennessee and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana where he graduated from John Marshall High School and enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps.

From June 1975 to September 2003, he completed numerous duty assignments that included Electronics Repairman, Drill Instructor, Electronics



Maintenance Officer, Parachutist, Military Police Officer, and Commanding Officer, retiring at the rank of Major.

After retirement, he joined the Stafford County Sheriff's Office as a Patrol Deputy. In 2006, he was hired to be a Program Manager for a security company but remained a Reserve Deputy.

Now retired, Larry Carmon is currently the Secretary of Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #15. However, his more rewarding role started some years ago in the corporate world, when he was asked if he would be Santa Claus for his company's Christmas party. Since that time, he has expanded his part time endeavor and is now the Lodge's Santa for their annual Christmas party. During the COVID pandemic, his daughter came up with the idea to provide photo opportunities. For the last three years, he has given families the opportunity to take photos with Santa and his motorcycle and the proceeds go to his favorite charity, The Semper



Fi Fund. This fund aids our country's wounded warriors and their families. This past year he rode with two of our local law enforcement agencies, Prince William Police Department and Stafford County Sheriff's Office, providing gifts and Christmas cheer to the children of both counties. He closed out the year at the annual Lodge #15 Christmas party, and provided gifts and Christmas cheer to the families in attendance. For 2022, he showcased his "Tactical Santa" outfit, which was a huge hit. He hopes to continue to spread the Christmas spirit for many, many years to come.

In his spare time "Santa Pops" is a Docent at The National Museum of the Marine Corps, located near Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia.



UMPIRE SANTA

**aka youth baseball umpire and
Army veteran DeWayne Corbitt**

Over Veterans' Day weekend, DeWayne Corbitt walked across a baseball field during an umpire clinic in Florida to introduce himself to Major League Baseball Umpire Laz Diaz.

"I'm DeWayne," he said. Laz shook his head and said, "No, bro. I have already been told; you are Santa."

Sure, the large gray beard was a giveaway, but "Umpire Santa" has become increasingly more recognized in the umpire community as that man from the North Pole. And he takes umpiring and being Santa with equal drive and responsibility.

Umpire Santa spent 17 years as a Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army (1998-2015) and was deployed to Afghanistan. His last unit was the 101st Airborne Division before he medically retired. Following his career in the service, he decided on a lark to grow a beard. It grew, and he was about to shave it off when his granddaughter, who was 3 at the time, said, "No Papa Santa."



To DeWayne, Santa always conjured up thoughts of the old men in the neighborhood. But how could he tell his granddaughter no?

Shortly afterward, he posted a pic on social media and his buddies started calling him Santa. Suffice it to say, it stuck.

A few years later, the beard remains. He has even gone to Santa School – yes, this is the real thing – the Northern Lights Santa Academy in Atlanta. He also has a Santa agent – also a real thing. He has learned tips on everything from how to be the perfect St. Nick to kids with challenges such as autism to pulling out special tricks such as having a red Rudolph nose light in his glove. Santa School even included some basic sign language lessons.

“I just learned tricks to make everything a little more magical,” he said.

Part of his holiday plans include participating in a holiday parade

and visiting children who are undergoing medical treatment at Prisma Health Children’s Hospital in his hometown of Columbia, South Carolina. He will be at the hospital on Christmas Eve.

UMPS CARE even surprised Santa and provided 25 Build-A-Bear® stuffed toys for him to bring to kids for the holiday, in addition to UMPS CARE baseball-themed activity books!

“I always tell the folks in the hospital to tell me about the really serious cases in advance,” he said. “They don’t need to see Santa cry.”

Being Santa is a great gig. Who doesn’t love Santa?

But in his other life, this Santa is also an umpire. And, well, it’s well documented that umpires don’t often run in the same circles of magic and hero worship.

“It really is different,” he said. “As Santa, you want to be everything to these kids. As an umpire, you got to call strikes and call them out.”

He’s also posted a photo of him checking his watch before a game and reminds players, coaches, and parents, “Don’t let the white beard fool you. I’m going to be fair.”

This Umpire Santa has been officiating youth baseball games in South Carolina, and while he can’t always be the good guy, he does do his best

to reward acts of kindness and good sportsmanship.

“I keep special cards in my pocket that say, ‘You have been caught being good,’” he said. “I can’t give them out during a ballgame because I don’t want to show favoritism.”

But he keeps mental notes. Once a young player hit a foul ball near the first base line. The first baseman caught the ball but ran into the fence. The batter ran over to make sure the first baseman was OK. After the game, Santa handed him a card as a reward for his good deed.

“You would’ve thought I handed him a million dollars,” DeWayne said.

There are times, however, when this Umpire Santa has experienced a little magic himself. One of those times was when he attended the Wounded Warrior Umpire Academy event in Florida and got to spend time with Laz Diaz, a longtime MLB Umpire who also served in the U.S. Marine Reserves.

Umpire Santa attended an Atlanta Braves game over the Fourth of July holiday as part of UMPS CARE Charities salute to the service of wounded warriors now working as umpires. He is part of an organization called Wounded Warrior Umpire Academy and works with youth baseball games in South Carolina.

MEET MUSIC CITY SANTA



MsDig Photography

Hello Santas, Mrs. Clauses, and Christmas Performers! I am Stephen Kiern. I grew up in the suburbs of New Orleans. My wife, Margaret, grew up in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, in semi-rural East Tennessee. We met at Tennessee Tech and were married in 1976. Nashville has been our home since 1989. We have been Christmas Portrayal Artists since 2003. Together, we are Music City Santa and Mrs. Claus. Over the years, like so many of you, we have participated in big and small events. Of course, it is always sweet to entertain children. But some of our fondest memories have been volunteering with homeless men or being Santa and Mrs. Claus to men in recovery.

Oftentimes, homeless, or formerly incarnated men share painfully similar stories. Substance abuse or incarceration – or both – many have severed ties with their families, and they can be shunned by society. Friendships are scarce. They can be invisible while in

plain sight. But there is hope – in Nashville, and in many other cities and small towns.

For over a decade, my wife and I have volunteered with local ministries; Room in the Inn (RITI) and Welcome Home Ministries (WHM).

RITI, founded by the late Father Charles Strobel in 1985, ministers to those who call the streets of Nashville home. RITI provides programs that emphasize human development and recovery through education, self-help, and work.

WHM, founded by Daryl R. Murray in 1999, helps provide housing to men who have chosen the path to recovery from additions, homelessness, or have recently been incarcerated. WHM is often the first step to recovery and restoration for men who have lost everything but who want to try to start again.



Both ministries offer services 24/7/365. Our involvement with RITI is during the coldest months of the year. Margaret and I volunteer with WHM year-round.

RITI's Winter Shelter program runs from November through March each season, in coordination with over 200 congregations in Middle Tennessee. The program provides safe shelter, warm meals, and fellowship. For five months every Monday night, Brentwood Baptist Church is privileged to care for more than a dozen men overnight. Margaret and I are members of BBC.

The men are transported by van from downtown Nashville to the church. Upon arrival, they receive

bedding and clean linens. Some take showers while others have their clothes washed by volunteers. Everyone is fed a delicious, home cooked meal. BBQ is a fan favorite. And second and third dibs are always available along with popular desserts.

WHM opened its first home with nine beds. It currently operates nine residences, serving nearly 80 men. Several times each year, our Sunday School class prepares diner for the men. The after-dinner Bible study is engaging and very well attended. Our conversations are upbeat and positive, and many share their longing to reconnect with their families.

Beyond helping to provide meals, offer a listening ear, and an openness to building faith-infused relationships, my wife and I have had the privilege of being Santa and Mrs. Claus for the annual WHM Christmas Feast for over a decade. This is one of the few times during the year which all the residents are together in one place for fun and fellowship. Their banter is infectious. Everyone is relaxed. And, stuffed!

After dinner, Santa and Mrs. Claus are assigned a spot for the Christmas photos. What happens next, is ALWAYS one of the most enduring times for our entire Christmas Season. Every person's name is called to receive a gift card from us and have their Christmas photos taken. Standing together with Music City Santa and Mrs. Claus, the cameras capture a moment that will be etched in the hearts of everyone in the photo, the staff, and others in attendance.

Smiles are immediate. The chuckles and giggles bring back Christmas memories that may have been tucked away. Year after year, the comments we receive ring familiar. "The last time I had my picture taken with Santa Claus, was with my . . .

“I haven’t done this since . . .”

“This will be the first picture my family sees of me in way too long.”

“Santa and Mrs. Claus, thank you very much for doing this. It means a lot.”

After the photos are taken and memories made, the residents return to their houses. As Mrs. Claus and I leave, we can sense many of these men are one step closer to being reunited with their families and loved ones.

If you are still reading this, you may be saying to yourself, “This is nothing new or different about these stories. Everything you are saying is ordinary.”

And that IS the point. Being kind should be profoundly ordinary. There is nothing new or different about being kind. As Santas, Mrs. Clauses and Christmas Performers, we have all heard stories like what I have shared.

But are we intentionally living out kindness every day? Not only at Christmastime. Do we embody kindness, gentleness, self-control, godliness, peace, joy, hope, and love? We cannot escape the fact that the whole world is watching us. We are Santa & Mrs. Claus!

I extend a challenge to all of us, including myself. Since we cannot escape how we look (everyone instantly knows who we are), let us, individually, and together, resolve to be extraordinarily exceptional with deeds and in our actions with our families, friends, colleagues, and all who we meet in person and online. Including those who may be invisible in our society.

After all, that IS what the world expects from Santa and Mrs. Claus!





The HEART of NASHVILLE

Conveniently located on the edge of buzzing Broadway, the Frist Art Museum stands as a local favorite and Nashville must-see. Explore ever-changing exhibitions, hands-on artmaking for all ages, stunning Art Deco architecture, and the Frist gift shop. Youth 18 and under are always FREE.

FristArtMuseum.org

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Upcoming Events in 2023

September 1 Accepting Applications for IBRBS Board of Directors

September 28-30, 2023, NORPAC Santas Christmas Performers Conference, Federal Way, WA

The Toy Fair September 30-October 3, 2023, Jacob K. Javits Center New York, NY

October 12-14, 2023, Santa Nana's Colorado Springs, Colorado

ISC2024 Registration is Open, click [HERE](#) for registration.

We are looking for compelling and captive stories of Santas, Mrs. Clauses, and Christmas Performers. Do you have a story of your IBRBS chapter in action in the community? Do you volunteer for a non-profit? Do you know of a Christmas Performer who embodies the tenets of IBRBS? Do you have input or comments? Email Newsletter@IBRBS.org! We love to hear from you.

For more information on advertising rates, email Newsletter@IBRBS.org

Next Issue: Christmas 2023 Is Here!



Downtown Vintage Trolley / Memphis Travel

Santas, Mrs. Clauses & Christmas Performers

**NORPAC Christmas Workshop
deadline is September 8.**

***The conference sessions will
include the following:***

- * Santa as a Business-Employer's view**
- * Santa and Mrs. Claus: Business or Hobby**
- * Dealing with Difficult Children**
- * Being Mrs. Claus**
- * Mrs. Claus and Santa**
- * Working with Props**
- * Improvisation and Storytelling**
- * Videoing Santa and Mrs. Claus**

Also:

- * Basket Raffle**
- * Ornament Exchange**
- * 50/50 Raffle**

Two Lunches and Dinner provided by:

Ezell's Chicken, Olive Garden, and Azteca

Entertainment: A Concert by Dickens Carolers

For more information, [click HERE!](#)





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