

# THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF IBRBS

# CHRISTMAS

# CONNECTIONS

## Spring 2026 Edition

Welcome to our Spring 2026 edition! As we begin this new season, we're excited to launch a refreshed newsletter to help keep our community connected.

We plan to publish three to four editions each year, featuring updates from Board activities, news from IBRBS chapters, member articles, and committee highlights. Our goal is to create a space where we can truly Support – Share – Inspire one another.

Thank you for being part of IBRBS—we look forward to growing together this year!

### Message from the IBRBS Chairman of the Board



Thank you for your support and for the trust you've placed not only in me, but in the entire IBRBS team.

With your continued support, we are committed to revitalizing this organization and restoring it as the premier Santa organization it once was. We recognize that we have fallen short in recent years, but with the election of new board members in February, a new Chairman, and newly elected officers as of June 10, we are united in our dedication to moving forward. Our goal is to rebuild what was lost and deliver an IBRBS you can once again be proud to be part of.

We know this won't happen overnight. Change takes time, and while we may not all agree on every detail, please know that we are here to listen. Your voice matters, and your input will help guide our path forward.

One commitment I can share with confidence is that we are actively working toward hosting ISC 2028, with plans to announce details by September. We're focused on creating an exceptional event—featuring improved venues, longer and more engaging workshops, new presenters, an expanded vendor space, and a secondhand shop. With the dedication of the board and a committed committee, ISC 2028 has the potential to be one of our most exciting events yet.

While I could speak more about myself, the truth is that I'm just one part of an incredible team of dedicated individuals across our board and leadership. It's a privilege to serve alongside them.

If you have questions, ideas, or feedback, please reach out to us at [board@ibrbs.org](mailto:board@ibrbs.org) or directly to me at [hgraham@ibrbs.org](mailto:hgraham@ibrbs.org). You can also find contact information for our officers and committees on our website if you'd like to get involved.

We are here to listen, to collaborate, and to make the changes that matter most to you.

Howard Graham

Chairman of the Board / Events Officer

Santa Claus Hall of Fame, Class of 2025

### Message from the IBRBS President and CEO

Earlier this year, you trusted me with a seat on this board. I'm grateful for that—and honored to now serve in this new role.

Many of you know I'm an engineer. That means I think in terms of systems, processes, and long-term outcomes. But I also know that no system works without people—and trust is what makes any organization function. Both will guide me moving forward.

I have ideas about what we need—stronger governance, momentum toward ISC2028, and rebuilding relationships across our community. But just as importantly, I'm listening. Those conversations are already shaping our next steps.

I also want to thank the officers who stepped up to serve. We may have different approaches, but I'm confident we share the same goal: what's best for IBRBS. That's a strong foundation.

We're not perfect, and we won't pretend to be. But I promise to lead with integrity, communicate openly, and make decisions you can understand.

If you have ideas or concerns, please reach out—I read my own email. [chamilton@ibrbs.org](mailto:chamilton@ibrbs.org)

Always learning....

Craig Hamilton



**We'd love to hear from you. Please send your articles and updates to [Newsletter@IBRBS.org](mailto:Newsletter@IBRBS.org)**

# IBRBS Santa's Heart Awards

## Celebrating the Heart of Christmas: Announcing the 2026 and 2025 Santa's Heart Award Recipients

Christmas characters have lots of heart. At IBRBS, this selfless nature is the foundation of our community, embodied by the performers who dedicate their time, energy, and love to pro-bono and charitable endeavors. While much of our work is seen by the public, a different kind of magic happens away from the spotlight through the quiet service of our members. It is with great pride that we announce the recipients of the **2025 and 2026 Santa's Heart Awards**, recognizing the extraordinary contributions made by our members to their local communities over the past two years.

This year, over 150 members submitted applications to record their time. Last year alone, our members logged over 6,000 volunteer hours and raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for charity. These submissions highlight an incredible range of volunteer efforts, from individual home and hospice visits to partnerships with community organizations like the Ronald McDonald House, Kiwanis, and local shelters. By focusing on vulnerable populations—including children in hospitals, special needs youth and adults, seniors, and veterans—our members continue to have a profound impact on those who need holiday cheer the most.

We are honored to present the 2026 Santa's Heart overall Award to **Robert Taylor**. Robert's tireless dedication to charitable service has touched countless lives, exemplifying the core values of IBRBS.



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Five years ago, Robert and his wife Tracey founded **Santa's Christmas Village**, a 501c3 non-profit. This monumental project involves an all-year effort to seek donations from businesses and individuals to purchase gifts for children.. Held on the first Saturday of December before the Pryor, Oklahoma Christmas parade, the event gave away over \$30,000 in free gifts for 750 children ages 1 – 12 years old this year alone. In addition, this year, families traveled from four different states to attend.

Robert and Tracey find immense joy in seeing the smiling faces of the children as they leave the village with gifts in hand. His commitment to bringing joy to those in need—without expectation of reward—serves as an inspiration to our entire membership.

### 2026 Regional Honorees

The depth of talent and compassion within our organization is reflected in our Regional Finalists. These individuals and their teams have demonstrated exceptional impact within their respective regions:

Mid-Atlantic . . . William Maney  
Mid-Central . . . Owen Davenport  
North Central . . . Leigh Serfling  
North East . . . Colleen Roche  
North West . . . Leon Taylor

Pacific West . . . Cortney Lofton  
Rocky Mountains . . . Kevin Boydston  
Smoky Mountain . . . Steven Kruzner  
South Central . . . Blake Woodson  
South East . . . Debra Weller

### Celebrating Our 2025 Awardees

We also want to extend a well-deserved spotlight to the fantastic applicants from last year whose formal recognition was delayed. Please join us in celebrating our 2025 honorees:

Overall and Eastern . . . Ed & Leila Sevcik  
Central Region . . . Scott Lowry

Mountain Region . . . Kam Breitenbach  
Pacific Region . . . David Myers

### New Pin & Trophy Designs



This year brings an update to our standard recognition pieces. Every applicant and registered volunteer will receive the modified **Santa's Heart Pin** to proudly display their dedication to charitable work.

Maintaining the spirit of the previous style, the new circular insignia features vibrant red text framing a green sleigh, with a central heart now sailing across a sparkling navy-blue night sky. In addition to the design update, approved applicants will receive a commemorative metal bar "hanger" engraved with the year of service. These hangers are designed to be stacked, creating a visible, growing legacy of your commitment.

Furthermore, custom physical trophies—featuring a heart cradled by supportive hands—have been ordered for all 2025 and 2026 regional and overall honorees as a lasting testament to their exceptional dedication.

**Shipping Note:** The new pins, trophies, and hangers are currently being manufactured. They will be shipped out to all qualifying applicants as soon as they arrive at our inventory facility, with an estimated dispatch window of approximately 45 days.

Recording your service isn't about bragging; it is about measuring the collective impact and the spirit of giving of the entire IBRBS community. We invite you to log your hours and impact throughout the season for future recognition.

**"You truly make the world a brighter place."**

**Thank you from the 2026 Santa's Heart Committee:** John Arnold, Stephen Arnold, Kam Breitenbach, Cynthia Knox, Brad Lounsbury, Howard Graham

# Message from the Membership Officer

**IBRBS Membership is seeking Regional Representatives for several open regions.** If you're interested in serving, please contact Wade Moore, Membership Officer [wmoore@ibrbs.org](mailto:wmoore@ibrbs.org)

## Current Open Regional Representative Positions

- **Europe (EU)** Position Open
- **Mid-Atlantic (ME)** — Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington D.C. — Position Open
- **North Central (NC)** Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota — Position Open
- **Northwest (NW)** Alaska, Oregon, Washington — Position Open
- **Pacific West (PAC)** — Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada — Position Open
- **Southeast (SE)** — Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee — Position Open

## Volunteer with IBRBS—and Help Shape the Future

IBRBS is growing, and we're looking for passionate individuals ready to make a meaningful impact. Volunteering with IBRBS is a unique opportunity to contribute your skills, collaborate with a dedicated community, and help guide the future of our organization.

Whether you can offer your time, expertise, or fresh ideas, your involvement matters. Join us in strengthening IBRBS and making a lasting difference.

Please complete the **IBRBS Volunteer Interest Form** at <https://ibrbs.org/ibrbs-volunteer-interest-form/>, or contact the Board or Officers directly from the contacts page at <https://ibrbs.org/board/>.

**Get involved today—and be part of what's next.**

## IBRBS Thomas Carmody Christmas School Scholarships

We are thrilled to announce the recipients of the 2026 IBRBS Thomas Carmody Christmas School Scholarships! Following in the passion of Tom Carmody, our dedicated, long-time Membership Officer, these scholarship recipients will take their love of continuing education and learning to grow and develop their skills as professional Christmas characters. This year's winners are pursuing higher education across a dynamic group of institutions including SANTAOLLOGY, IUSC, the Worldwide Santa Claus Network, the School of Santas, the Charles W. Howard Santa Claus School, School4Santas, and the Christmas Performer Workshops (CPW). Collectively, these recipients are seeking to master advanced performance techniques, professional business operations, and the deep art of storytelling to transform their individual portrayals into authentic, heart-centered embodiments of the Christmas spirit. Together, they deserve these awards because they represent a passionate mix of emerging talents and deeply experienced pillars of the community who view portraying Santa as a lifelong commitment to unconditional love, and who are actively investing their time and energy to elevate the standard of excellence for the entire Brotherhood.

Please join us in celebrating this year's exceptional scholarship recipients: Ben A Belhorn, Owen Davenport, Danny Neal, Thomas Cashion, Richard Wood, Timothy Adams, Matthew Lang, Dan Castle, Stephen James, Rene Amy, and Francis DenDulk.

If you'd like to see your Christmas Character School listed for consideration in next year's scholarship applications, please email [Scholarship@ibrbs.org](mailto:Scholarship@ibrbs.org) with your school's name (including any AKAs or former names), a brief history covering its background and years in operation, a list of courses or curriculum provided, schedule details showing typical days and total instructional minutes per day, location details (specific city, multiple locations, traveling, convention-based, and/or online), complete contact info (physical address, email, and phone number), and the web presence URL for more information and registration. Congratulations once again to all of our 2026 winners!

**Scholarship Committee:** Ginny Scott, Lori Dinwiddie, and Roger Weyersberg

## IBRBS Mentor Moments

Mentor Moments – exceptional training *exclusively available* to IBRBS members. Mentor Moments foster growth, collaboration, and skill-building through interactive, enriching online sessions.

Mentor Moments is a monthly online session (January-October) led by a respected Christmas educator(s) who shares their expertise on a subject important to Santas, Mrs. Clauses, elves, and other professionals who create Christmas magic. We record the sessions and make them available to members from the member dashboard. You can view live or review after the session at your leisure. Do not miss the exciting upcoming sessions we have arranged for our members. If you would like to present a session, contact the Mentor Moments team, and we will schedule your topic for future sessions. [Mentoring@ibrbs.org](mailto:Mentoring@ibrbs.org)



It's easy to register – select the session you want to attend, fill out the registration form, and you'll receive an email confirmation with the link to a Zoom session. You'll have a chance to pose questions on the topic as part of the registration process, and they will be shared with the presenter to address during the session.

# IBRBS Chapter Updates

## Gulf Coast Kringles



The Gulf Coast Kringles (USA Gulf Coast IBRBS Chapter) kept the spirit alive in May 2026—with a touch of international adventure!

Founder Dave Meisburger (Santa IV), a fourth-generation Santa, and his photographer, Herman Austin, Sr., set sail from Tampa on a Royal Caribbean cruise (May 23–30), visiting Roatán, Honduras; Belize City, Belize; Costa Maya, Mexico; and Cozumel, Mexico.

Along the way, Santa IV spread cheer with cruise staff, passengers, local vendors, and residents—capturing memorable moments in festive style. His wardrobe ranged from a custom burgundy tuxedo to relaxed summer attire. (Photos included!)

### Coming Up in June

Join us for a fun and festive Open House:

**When:** Saturday, June 27 | 2:30–5:00 pm

**Where:** Broussard's Barber Shop, 158-G E Ohr St, Biloxi, MS

Enjoy:

Free hair & beard trims

Grooming tips and advice

Snacks and beverages

Door prizes

**This free event is open to everyone—we'd love to see you there!**

## Northern Illinois Christmas Entertainers

On April 26, 2026, Thirty-Six people attended the NICE (Northern IL Christmas Entertainers) Luncheon.

In an IBRBS/Cherry Hill Program's first, two Cherry Hill Programs Ambassadors presented "The Business Of Being Santa." and talked about Cherry Hill Program's new interest in Mrs. Clauses.

## Palm Tree Santas



Since forming in 2006, the Palm Tree Santas have continued to grow while bringing holiday spirit across Florida.

We host three statewide events each year:

**Santa's Workshop (Tarpon Springs):** August 14–16 — affordable and great training

**Celebrate Our Season:** A social gathering each January (2027 details coming soon)

**Palm Tree Santas Cruise:** February 28–March 7, 2027

Throughout the year, we also enjoy connecting at regional luncheons and dinners across the state.

### Upcoming Gatherings

Southeast Luncheon — Lake Park, FL (June 6)

Central Luncheon — Lakeland, FL (June 24)

**Recent Meetups** Titusville, St. Petersburg, Ocala, and Plant City

### Stay Connected

Facebook: *Palm Tree Santas*

Website: Visit Palm Tree Santas

Our "Find a Santa" page features members available for hire

**If you live in or are visiting Florida, we'd love for you to join us!**

## New Mexico Enchanting Santas



The New Mexico Enchanting Santas are proud to announce a new partnership with the Red Cross to support children affected by fires and floods. After connecting with Ms. Jamie Mueller, Northern New Mexico Disaster Volunteer Coordinator, we're excited to begin bringing comfort and joy to families during difficult times.

While many organizations help provide essentials like shelter, food, and clothing, children often lose their toys and sense of normalcy. That's where we step in. Our Santas and Mrs. Clauses deliver toys directly to these children—dressed in full holiday spirit—reminding them that they are not forgotten. Jamie will share information about families in need, and our volunteers will respond by delivering toys tailored to each child. For now, these gifts are being funded personally by our members, but we look forward to expanding through future donations.

### A Heartwarming First Delivery

Last Sunday, Santas Dave Lovato and Skip Bleistein made our very first delivery to a 10-year-old boy whose family lost their home in a fire. The family is currently staying in an Albuquerque hotel with Red Cross assistance. This moment truly captured who we are—*Santas That Care*.

### Chapter Updates

Our last gathering took place on April 19, 2006, at Weck's Breakfast & Lunch Diner, with 26 members in attendance.

Members expressed interest in staying connected year-round, and we're excited to launch monthly Zoom meetings. Our first virtual meeting will be held Sunday, May 24 at 5:00 pm (approximately 40 minutes).

We've also introduced chapter logo mugs and stickers, which will be distributed free of charge at our next gathering on July 19.

### Meeting Location Update

We've moved our in-person meetings to a local restaurant that offers a private room—perfect for better conversation while continuing our beloved brunch tradition.

**Together, we're making a difference—one smile at a time.**

## Idaho Santas



We have only had one big get together for our group with a good turnout of 44 members. We have sadly held two - Celebrations of Life - Final Sleigh Rides - for two of our members.

We have a "Christmas Performers Workshop", coming to the Boise Area in June 12-14, with Santa True's "Love and Joy Train".

# IBRBS Chapter Updates

## Garden State Santas



The Garden State Santas gathered for their spring dinner meeting on May 12, 2026, at Sarah Jane's Restaurant in Somerville, NJ. It was a lively, well-attended evening filled with holiday cheer. A big thank-you to our favorite server, Angela, for her patience and outstanding service, as well as to Jimmy, James, and Bee for the great food and support. During the business portion, members focused on coordinating coverage for special events—especially those requiring specific skills. Up next: our summer picnic (date and time to be announced).



## S.C. Santas & Co.

Last month, we partnered with **It's Improv**, a local group that offers free improv training to nonprofits. They joined us for a fun, one-hour Intro to Improv session—and it was a hit with everyone who attended! We're a small, supportive chapter dedicated to helping each other grow as Christmas performers. Our group includes seasoned pros with decades of experience as well as newcomers just getting started. At our next meeting, we'll shift focus to the business side, covering topics like what makes an effective business card, what to include, where to print them, and digital options like Dot. Our members stay active in the community, volunteering at schools, hospitals, libraries, and military events. Many have also appeared on TV, marched in parades with crowds of over 250,000, and been featured in national magazines.

## SoCal Santas



SoCal Santas is a friendly social group for Christmas performers and their families across Southern California—from La Habra and Long Beach to Irvine and Huntington Beach. We meet on the second Saturday of each month to relax, connect, and share a meal, rotating locations to keep things fresh. Our gatherings are casual, family-friendly, and all about enjoying time with fellow holiday magic-makers. Interested in joining us? Reach out to Ginny Scott—we'd love to have you!

**Don't see your chapter here? Would you like to?  
Send your updates to Newsletter@IBRBS.org**

## Help Launch the New IBRBS Newsletter Committee!

We're excited to announce the formation of a brand-new IBRBS Newsletter Committee—and we're looking for members to help build it from the ground up!

This is a great opportunity to shape the voice, style, and direction of the IBRBS newsletter from the very beginning. If you're interested in contributing your skills or trying something new, we'd love to have you on board.

We're currently seeking volunteers with an interest in:

- Writing & Content Creation – Articles, updates, and member stories
- Editing & Proofreading – Polishing content for clarity and consistency
- Content Composition – Organizing and structuring each issue
- Graphic Design & Layout – Creating visuals and designing the newsletter's look and feel

No prior experience is required—just enthusiasm and a willingness to collaborate!

### Why join the committee?

- Be part of something new and help define its direction
- Collaborate with fellow IBRBS members
- Build and showcase your skills
- Make a meaningful contribution to the IBRBS community



If you'd like to get involved in launching this exciting new initiative, please reach out and let us know how you'd like to contribute. Come help us create something great. You can complete the **IBRBS Volunteer Interest Form** at <https://ibrbs.org/ibrbs-volunteer-interest-form/>, or send an email to [newsletter@ibrbs.org](mailto:newsletter@ibrbs.org).

# Announcing the Election of New IBRBS Officers



The IBRBS Board of Directors is pleased to announce that on June 10th, the newly elected officers officially assumed their roles, marking the commencement of their two-year terms. Notably, for the first time in several years, all officer positions within the organization have been fully filled.

Please join us in welcoming the following individuals to the executive team:

- President / CEO: Craig Hamilton
- Membership Officer: Russell "Wade" Moore
- Chief Financial Officer (CFO): Ann Donley
- Secretary: Ralph Puccini
- Chief Technology Officer (CTO): John Arnold
- Governance & Operations Officer: Quintin Koger Kidd
- Events Officer: Howard Graham
- Communications Officer: Don Fasig
- Treasurer: Gale Teschendorf

Securing a fully staffed leadership team strengthens our ability to support, advocate for, and advance our global community of Christmas performers and holiday professionals. We express our sincere gratitude to all members who participated in the election process, and we thank our new officers for their commitment to serving the organization.

We look forward to a productive and successful term under their leadership.

**Christmas Connections** is looking for fresh content, and the best stories come from our members! Do you have a tip, some local news, a piece of history, or a heartwarming story from the North Pole?

We are currently seeking:

- Tips & News to help fellow portrayal artists.
- Stories & History that celebrate our community's legacy.
- Your Experiences that deserve to be published!

Submit your articles, stories, or ideas today! Email: [newsletter@ibrbs.org](mailto:newsletter@ibrbs.org)

**Note:** We want to hear your authentic voice, so please no AI-generated content—just your wonderful, original stories!

Want to place an ad? Reach out to us at [newsletter@ibrbs.org](mailto:newsletter@ibrbs.org) for advertising opportunities!

# Tech in the Workshop: Using 3D Printing to Enhance Your Christmas Appearance by John Arnold (Whimsy Claus)

As a professional Santa, I am constantly seeking ways to learn from others, improve my skills, and elevate my wardrobe and presentation. Many of us begin our journey with a standard, off-the-rack suit, traditional boots, and a basic belt. My advice to anyone starting out is simple: begin with what you can afford, and then, year after year, invest in improving, adding to, and customizing your wardrobe to perfectly suit your unique character.

Much like Kris Kringle the craftsman, I love to dabble in the workshop, creating my own custom accessories. Before diving in, I want to emphasize that this is in no way a criticism of the incredibly talented professionals and vendors who supply our Christmas community. The custom pieces I create are not meant to replace or equal their magnificent craftsmanship, nor do I ever advocate for copying existing artist images. Instead, I want to share my personal journey into the world of 3D printing and show how you can safely create entirely unique items for your own holiday appearances.

## Custom Challenge Coins

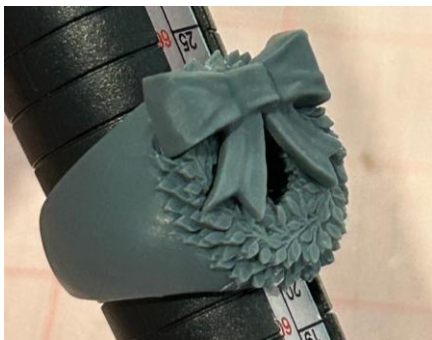
One of the most rewarding projects you can undertake is creating your own signature challenge coin. If you have traditional digital drawing skills—or if you leverage generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, or Adobe Firefly—you can easily render a completely original coin design. Once you have a high-quality 2D image of your custom design, it can be converted into a 3D-printable file, allowing you to hand out truly personalized tokens to children, clients, or fellow performers.

Using a standard FDM (filament) printer, you can easily print out basic versions of your coins right at home. I actually prefer printing my own prototypes first just so I can see and feel the physical design in my hands before sending them out for mass production. Once you are happy with the layout, those finished digital designs can be manufactured in a number of professional ways, including laser etching, CNC routing, or traditional metal casting.



## Resin-Printed Rings and Jewelry

For finer, high-detail accessories like custom rings, a resin 3D printer (SLA) is an incredible asset. Unlike traditional filament printers, resin printers use a liquid photopolymer cured by light, which allows for incredibly smooth surfaces and intricate details—perfect for capturing microscopic snowflakes, filigree, or custom monograms.



## Custom Leather Stamps for Belts and Boots

Where I am currently spending most of my experimentation time is in the realm of custom leather stamps. The process starts with a digital image I create, which I then turn into a Scalable Vector Graphic (SVG) of a holiday motif like a snowflake, candy cane, or holly branch. From there, I import that flat graphic into a 3D modeling tool like Blender or TinkerCAD, where I can "extrude" the image—essentially raising the design off the background to create a solid, raised stamp block.

Once the design is ready, I send those 3D files over to my printer to construct the physical stamp. Using them on real leather is incredibly satisfying: you simply wet the leather canvas first and then transfer the impression. If it's a larger print, I use heavy-duty clamps to apply even pressure, but for a smaller stamp, a few firm strikes with a regular rubber mallet does the trick beautifully. By using this exact workshop methodology, I've been able to easily add completely unique, embossed holiday patterns to my own leather belt, boot cuffs, and create a small pouch.



## Small Toys and Giveaways

The final frontier of what you can accomplish in the workshop with a 3D printer revolves around toys and giveaways! There is a massive online library of community designs available featuring flexible, articulated toys, custom holiday ornaments, and festive trinkets that can be printed entirely at home. These make for incredible, memorable hand-outs during visits that children (and parents) absolutely treasure.

If you have a bit of the craftsman spirit in you, 3D printing is a fantastic, deeply rewarding way to ensure your holiday appearance is entirely your own, and if you have questions, reach out to me at

[Whimsyclaus.com](http://Whimsyclaus.com)

# What a couple of IBRBS Members Do Out of Season

## Carrying the Spirit of Christmas All Year Long

When the Christmas lights dim and the sleigh bells quiet, many IBRBS members continue spreading joy long after the season ends. Among them are **Santa Wade Moore** and **Mrs. Claus Kim Moore**, who devote their time to supporting local shelters across Chattanooga and North Georgia. Their work is part of a powerful mission born from love, loss, and a young woman's extraordinary heart.

## The Story Behind Kelsey's Christmas for Kids

Kelsey's Christmas for Kids began with a simple but profound idea from the Ownby family's middle daughter, **Kelsey**. For her senior project, she wanted to fill backpacks with blankets, food, and essentials for people experiencing homelessness during Christmas.

But during one delivery, Kelsey noticed children playing outside a shelter. Her heart shifted instantly. Instead of receiving gifts herself, she asked her parents to use the money to buy toys for those children.

That moment sparked what became **"Santa for Shelters."**

Tragically, on March 25, 2021, Kelsey, her unborn child, and her husband were killed in a transfer truck accident. Her family chose to honor her legacy by continuing the ministry she started. Today, they carry her mission forward through **Kelsey's Christmas for Kids**, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to bringing a magical Christmas to children living in shelters and foster homes.



## Creating Christmas Magic for Children Who Need It Most

Kelsey's Christmas for Kids doesn't just deliver gifts—they deliver an experience filled with wonder.

- A full **Santa's Workshop** is set up each year.
- Volunteers spend weeks shopping, sorting, and wrapping.
- Two box trucks are loaded with bikes, toys, clothes, snacks, and more for delivery to three shelters across North Georgia and Chattanooga.
- Additional events are held for foster families that include stories and cookies with Santa.
- A photographer captures each child's moment with Santa.
- Children open one gift with Santa; the rest are saved for Christmas morning.

For families facing the hardest moments of their lives, this visit becomes a memory of hope—proof that even in their lowest season, someone showed up with love.

## How the Mission Works

### Everyone Deserves a Good Christmas

Children in shelters often ask, *"How will Santa find me here?"* This mission ensures that he does. During Storytime, Mrs. Claus explains Santa's magic key. It allows Santa to open doors on Christmas Eve. It also sends special messages to Santa reminding him of the children who have moved to another location.

### The Gift of Giving

The team visits shelters shares dinner, make crafts, and write letters to Santa. Community support fuels the rest:

- A giving tree at the local Walmart lets shoppers choose a child to sponsor.
- Donations help purchase larger items like beds, food, and transportation.
- Volunteers sort and wrap every gift.
- Santa delivers everything **two days before Christmas**, greeted by children eagerly watching from the windows.

### The Ownby Family's Legacy of Love

After losing Kelsey, her family expanded the project to honor her spirit. Working with children year-round helps them heal while keeping her memory alive.

Grieving a child is a pain no parent should endure. Through this mission, the Ownbys hope others will find healing by helping those in need.

### Share a Bear: Expanding the Mission Year-Round

The organization now hosts group birthday parties for children in shelters. Each child receives a **Build-A-Bear**, lovingly made by other children just for them. This simple act of kindness brings comfort, connection, and joy.

(Currently, this program is not active)

### A Glimpse into the Magic

The annual ornament and cookie-decorating event is a highlight for families at the shelter. Delivery day with Santa is another unforgettable moment—filled with laughter, photos, and the warmth of community.

### In Loving Memory: Kelsey Ownby Smith

Kelsey began this mission as a high school senior project in 2016. She used her savings—and the money meant for her own Christmas gifts—to buy presents for children at the shelter.

She continued this tradition every year until her passing in 2021.

Kelsey was 21. She was vibrant, funny, compassionate, a lover of selfies and the outdoors, and someone who never met a stranger. She leaves behind parents, siblings, and a son who shares her spirit. Her family misses her endlessly and looks forward to being reunited with her in Heaven.

Her legacy lives on in every smile, every wrapped gift, and every child who feels seen and loved because of her.

### Keeping the Spirit Alive

With the help of volunteers, donors, and community partners, Kelsey's Christmas for Kids continues to brighten the lives of countless children.

**Together, we can carry forward the true spirit of Christmas—one child & act of kindness at a time.**

# Book Reviews by Don Weinreis



Hello, allow me to introduce myself. I am Don, also known as Grandpa Gus, and sometimes as Santa. I have been asked to write something for my fellow IBRBS members, since I do a weekly book review on several Facebook sites. The reason that I do this is that so many new Santas as well as other Christmas entertainers seem to be reaching out for knowledge as to how to portray a Christmas character and what to do while you are portraying that character. Just so you know where I'm coming from, I started my working life at the Post Office. I also have a love of American history, and that led me to historical re-enacting. And through my children, I became a Scout leader. So, my adult life has been one of interacting with people both young and old. As time went on and historical events became too hard for me to attend, and my retirement from the Post Office loomed, a friend of mine, who was already a Santa, came to me and asked if I wouldn't take over one of his clients since he was moving. I've never turned down a friend, and that was the start of my officially being a Santa.

At the time I started, I didn't know about Santa schools as they are now. So, I began to collect books, magazines and videos all about Santa and Christmas. Anything that I could find that would help me be a better Santa and help me when I went out to visit. I would haunt used bookstores, garage sales, anywhere I thought I might find something that would add to my knowledge of Christmas, and Christmas traditions and the season that surrounds it, and in doing so, I have collected many books, some magazines and a few videos.

In my book reviews, it is my hope to share with other Christmas entertainers some of the books that have helped me to get to where I am as a Santa and maybe even make me and my fellow Christmas entertainers better at what we do.

Some of my favorite books are, Little Golden Book, Walt Disney's, Santa's Toy Shop. The Christmas Wish, by Lori Evert, The Mole Family's Christmas, by Russel Hoban, Why Mrs. Claus Loves Snowflakes, by John C. McCarty and Jenny L Watt, A Special Place for Santa, by Jeanne Pieper, these are books that I have reviewed and used while visiting families. Other books that I look to, to help me build my knowledge of Christmas are Stories behind the Great Traditions of Christmas, by Ace Collins, Family Christmas Treasury, by Michael Hague's, Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens, The Night Before Christmas, by Clement C. Moore (I always look for large formats in this book, so I can show the art work while I read). Celebrating A Merry Catholic Christmas, by Fr. William Saunders, The Autobiography of Santa Claus as told to Jeff Guinn and Bexley & Thayer: The Mystery of Santa Claus, by Ed Taylor. These are a few of my favorite books, some I have reviewed, some I will review in the future. Each book has increased my knowledge or provided me with pleasure. By sharing them with you, it is my hope that I might provide other Christmas entertainers a bit of knowledge.

Thank you for taking the time to read, I hope it adds to your knowledge as well.

Sincerely,

Don Weinreis

# In Loving Memory: Remembering "Santa Fred" Selinsky, Chairman Emeritus of IBRBS



On October 6, 2025, the international Christmas community lost a friend and mentor to many. Frederick "Santa Fred" Selinsky passed away, leaving behind a legacy built on genuine warmth, a quick wit, and a lifelong commitment to spreading joy. Anyone fortunate enough to share a stage or a meeting with Fred knew they were in the presence of someone truly generous.

Born in Syracuse, New York, on October 24, 1949, Fred's life was defined by service and adventure. He proudly served in the U.S. Navy for 21 years, retiring as a Chief Petty Officer, before exploring an incredibly diverse path ashore. Over the years, Fred worked in law enforcement, managed a ranch as foreman, and excelled as a professional photographer. Many will remember his social media posts sharing his quieter passions—panning for gold with his faithful dog, Willie, or hitting the open road with his brother Mark on his beloved motorcycle, "Donder."

To the Christmas world, Santa Fred was a respected leader and mentor. Fred was a member of AORBS and the Forbes Santas groups, and he was also a recognized member of the Clan Claus Society. Santa Fred brought a wealth of experience when he joined IBRBS in 2013. His leadership quickly became critical to the organization's growth, during which he served with distinction as a past Chairman of the Board and was honored as Chairman Emeritus of IBRBS. Fred has been quoted on leadership and volunteering: *"If you want change, you can't do it from your armchair—you have to go out and do it."*

Closer to home, Fred, the Santa in Arizona, dedicated himself to fostering regional fellowship. He co-founded the Arizona Santas, Mrs. Claus and Elves chapter, gathering and mentoring local performers dedicated to preserving the magic of the holidays across the Southwest. He lived by his philosophy: *"Keep the spirit of Christmas in your heart all year long."*

Fred's holiday spirit and charitable acts weren't reserved for Christmas. Alongside his beloved wife, Chery, Fred spent his life volunteering and giving back. Together, they served as "Grandpa and Grandma" at camp for *Hope and a Future*, a foster children's organization. Fred also dedicated his time to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and provided comfort to many as a volunteer with *Hospice of the Valley*.

Fred is survived by his loving wife, Chery Selinsky; his three brothers; his two sons (predeceased by one son); his stepson; and his grandchildren. He also leaves behind a legacy of love that extended deeply to his family, friends, community, and cherished dogs.

We miss Fred dearly, but his warmth, leadership, and spirit will forever live on in the hearts of the IBRBS family and the entire Santa community. Rest in peace, Chief.

