



## Send in the clown (students)

Published: August 1, 2011

DAY CAMP: Youngsters have chance to connect with ‘clownselfes’

By LISA PEMBERTON; Staff writer

Silliness wasn’t required – but it certainly was encouraged last week at one South Sound day camp.

Technically, there were only three rules at Clown Camp, according to instructor Justin “Jusby the Clown” Wright.

“Just be safe, just be supportive and just be challenged,” he said.

Students spent four hours a day at Stevens Field in Olympia’s South Capitol neighborhood working on a variety of clown skills, from juggling and unicycle riding to balloon twisting and the fine art of pie-in-the-face buffoonery.

They also perfected their theatrical makeup and one-of-a-kind costumes, and came up with their own wacky clown aliases, such as “Smoothie,” “Checked” and “Memo.”

“I’ve just had a great time here,” said Mia “Mini Silly” Collier, 10, of Olympia. “You get to make people laugh and you get to dress up really funny and just be yourself.”

Wright is a professional clown and comedy consultant. He studied dance, multimedia and “the shamanic origins of clowning” at The Evergreen State College, according to his website.

“I’ve been a clown my whole life, but I didn’t discover or acknowledge that until 1996, my senior year at Evergreen,” he said.

Wright went professional in 2005 and performs at birthday parties, retirement celebrations, nonprofit fundraisers and other special events.

Pies-in-the-face are his specialty, and Wright has delivered about 500 of them, including one to Hunter Doherty Adams, who is more commonly known as “Patch” Adams.

“It was (Adams’) 60th birthday, and he had a party in Seattle that we went to,” Wright said. Adams is a famed physician who was the subject of a 1998 film named for him.

Wright and his wife, Trish Kelso-Wright, a professional laughter yoga instructor, teamed with other local performers to offer two sessions of Clown Camp this summer.

The goal of the camps was to let kids have fun, encourage them to explore and create a clown personality and give them some basic performance skills, Kelso-Wright said.

“I’m starting to see their ‘clownselves,’ and that’s really rewarding,” she said. “It’s fun.”

One afternoon, the students put on a spontaneous 20-minute show for kids who were attending day camps at the nearby Lincoln Elementary School.

The result? Instant and positive feedback from an audience of their peers.

“They were like, ‘Wow, they’re clapping for us! They’re laughing for us!’” Wright said.

Organizers hope to hold another Clown Camp later this year, possibly when schools are out for winter break in December. Watch for details at [jusbythec clown.com](http://jusbythec clown.com).