

Spreading The Joy

By Mary Kibling
For the Concord Monitor

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The Joyful Joey clown troupe at Concord's Havenwood-Heritage Heights proves you're never too old for face paint.

When Arline French's husband, Harold, could no longer cope with New Hampshire winters, they moved from Andover to Hawaii. They have a daughter who lives on Maui, and they were there for two years before Harold died.

These days, French is back in New Hampshire. And in addition to sacred dancing and photography, she has spent her time learning to clown - part of an unlikely group of retiree-performers at Havenwood-Heritage Heights in Concord. It's trickier than you might think.

"The biggest problem for a 90-year-old clown is getting your makeup on smoothly in and over the wrinkles, but it's wonderful to be a clown," she said. "When you put that face on, your everyday self disappears. The clowning makes us happy and our audiences happy."

It was a pursuit of happiness of sorts that brought her back to the state in the



Arline French, a former Andover resident, with her clown pals from Havenwood Heights. Arline is in the back, on the right.

first place.

"I loved Hawaii," French said. "I made friends of so many different nationalities and cultures, but I missed the rest of my family. I had to come home." French has three other children, seven grandchildren, and three great grandchildren in this area.

"There were 19 of us at the Thanksgiving dinner table," she said.

French grew up a dancer. "My mother taught me to dance as soon as I could stand up," she said. She had performed on stage at age 12 and in the 1930s and '40s did exhibition ballroom dancing.

Today, at 90 years old, French does sacred dance at Havenwood after Sunday worship services. "Sacred dance is mostly arm movements and I've had a hip replaced, so this is as close to dancing as I get, now," she said. "We dance to hymns, and I love the music."

She is also a member of a performance troupe called the Joyful Joeys.

Last winter, Sally Kelly moved to Heritage Heights from western Massachusetts, where she had established a

clown ministry in her church. In Concord, she missed her clowns, but quickly remedied that situation. A note on a bulletin board invited anyone interested in becoming a clown to a meeting.

There are now 11 Joyful Joeys at Havenwood-Heritage Heights. ("Joey is another name for clown," Kelly explained.) The Joyful Joeys meet weekly to rehearse and study techniques, makeup, and costumes.

"We each have a clown name and have chosen the character we want to be," Kelly said. "We are Poppysseed, Booboo, Jake, New World, Posey, Coco, Dodo, Jiji, and I'm Gus. Our mission is to make people laugh, to bring therapeutic laughter and love to stressed adults and children."

The Joyful Joeys bring their ministry to the nursing unit at Havenwood once a month. They cavorted in the Kiwanis parade and performed on the Rev. Bob Williams's closed circuit television channel at Havenwood-Heritage Heights. "We look forward to performing at other

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ENGAGED Laura Godwin

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Bliss Godwin of Andover announce the engagement of their daughter Laura of Andover to Jonathan William Armitage of Laconia, son of Rev. Barry and Margaret Armitage of Laconia.

Miss Godwin graduated from Sunapee High School and the University of New Hampshire and teaches at Franklin Middle School. Mr. Armitage graduated from Laconia Christian School, Calvin College, and Plymouth State University and is a special education case manager at Franklin Middle School.

A July 2, 2005 wedding is planned.

BORN Taylor Michele Mayo

Erik and Marci Mayo of Northboro, Massachusetts announce the birth of their first child, a daughter, Taylor Michele on December 2 at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She weighed 5 pounds, 14 ounces and was 22.5 inches long.

Paternal grandparents are Don and Julie Mayo of East Andover. Maternal grandparents are Jim and Pam Stark of Jackson, Michigan.

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Chuck Will, the director of communications for the academy, said students who were evacuated from buildings within about 700 feet of the rink were returned to their rooms at about 11:45 PM. By Thursday night the girls' varsity team was back at practice on the ice.

Will said the evacuation was a good test of the school's emergency plan.

"Everyone did sort of exactly as they should have done," he said.

The Andover, East Andover, and Wilmot fire departments assisted with the incident. New London, Bristol, Franklin, Tilton-Northfield, Twin Rivers, and Grafton ambulances also responded.

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