

Latest news and updates from your Board and Committees

WINTER 2021

Meet Your Board Candidates



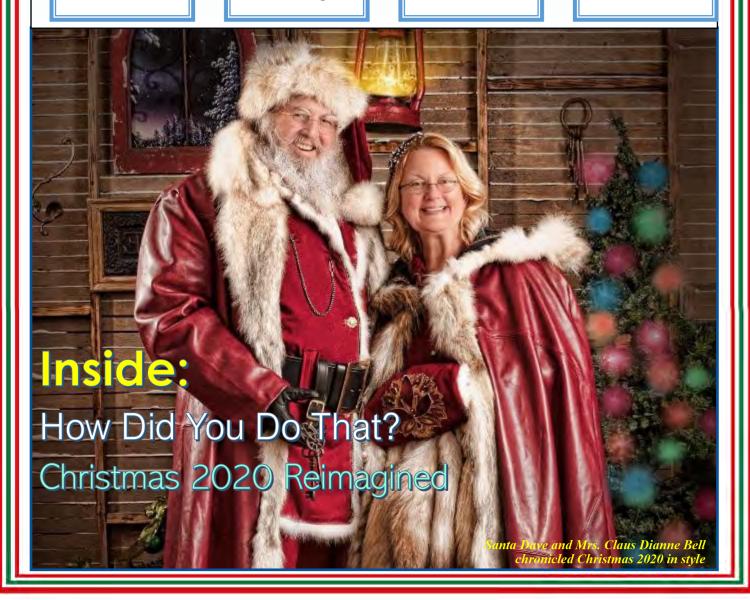
Christmas School Scholarships



Visit the New Website



Santa's Heart 2020





## 2020-2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephen Arnold (TN)—Director and President/CEO
SArnold@IBRBSantas.org

Fred Selinsky (AZ)—Director and Chairman of the Board FSelinsky@IBRBSantas.org

Tom Carmody (CO)—Director, Membership Services Officer, International Santa Claus Hall of Fame 2019
TCarmody@IBRBSantas.org

Lance Skapura (PA)—Director, Communications & Marketing Officer

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Fred Lueck (WA)—Information Technology Officer Webmaster@IBRBSantas.org

Steve Eastis (FL)—Director SEastis@IBRBSantas.org

Don Fasig (FL)—Director DFasig@IBRBSantas.org

Don White (CA)—Director and Membership Services Liaison <a href="https://www.dwite.org">DWhite@IBRBSantas.org</a>

Howie Bristow (MA)—Treasurer HBristow@IBRBSantas.org

Ron Robertson, (CA)—President Emeritus, International Santa Claus Hall of Fame 2013—Rest in Peace, Ron

Robert "Bob" Elkin (FL)—President Emeritus, International Santa Claus Hall of Fame 2017

#### Be Our Next Cover!

Submit your seasonal photo for the Spring Newsletter by March 31, 2021 and you may find yourself on the cover of the next Christmas Connections.

Click the camera to email your photo

The fine print—a photo release is required for images taken or owned by any professional photographer; we can provide a release form if needed.

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Spring Newsletter Deadlines Submit by March 31, 2021 Publish Date April 2021

Send your stories and photos to:

Newsletter@IBRBSantas.org

Newsletter Editorial Team

Stephen Arnold, Pat de Haan, Steve Eastis, Deanna Golden, Tom Harrington, Doug Billings, Lance Skapura and Eileen Turner

The Newsletter Team thanks all who contributed their stories and photos for this edition of Christmas Connections.



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Regional Representatives			
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Rocky Mountain William "Mac" McPherson (CO) WMcPherson@IBRBSantas.org	North Central Randy Greenfield (IA) RGreenfield@IBRBSantas.org		
South Central—OPEN	Mid-Central Margie Wolczak (IN) MWolczak@IBRBSantas.org		
Smoky Mountain Region Stephen Price SPrice@IBRBSantas.org	Mid-East Tom Bailey (VA) TBailey@IBRBSantas.org		
North East Howard Bristow (MA) HBristow@IBRBSantas.org	South East—OPEN		

To learn more about our Regional or District Representative program, send an email to VolunteerCoordinator@IBRBSantas.org



## DID YOU KNOW?

You can form an affiliated IBRBS Chapter with five active IBRBS members? To start the process, fill out an application from your Members Dashboard, or send an email to Membership@IBRBSantas.org.

## **Affiliated Chapters**

If you are not yet a member of a local Chapter, we encourage you to join or start one. Your Membership Team can help.

#### **North West**

NorPac Santas ~ Santa's Pack

#### Pacific/West/International

Arizona Santas ~ Inland Empire Santas ~ NorCal Santas ~ S.C. Santas & Co. ~ SoCal Santas ~ Surfside Santas

#### **Rocky Mountain**

Enchanted Santas of NM ~ Idaho Santas ~ Pike's Peak Santas ~ Rocky Mountain Santas ~ Utah Santas

#### **North Central**

Great Lakes Santas ~ Midwest Iowa Santas ~ Ozarks Santas

#### **South Central**

Diamond State Santas ~ Krewe of Kringles ~
Midsouthern Santa Society ~ Oklahoma Santas ~
Texas State Santas

#### Mid-Central

Bluegrass Santas ~ Heart of Ohio Santas ~ Hoosier Santas ~ Northern Illinois Santas ~ The Indiana Santa Claus Society ~ Wisconsin Santas

#### **South East**

Cotton State Santas ~ Dixie Coast Santas ~ Florida -Georgia Santas ~ Georgia Metro Santas ~ Real Bearded Santas of North Georgia ~ Palm Tree Santas ~ Peachtree Santas of GA

#### **Smoky Mountain**

Long Leaf Pine Santas ~ Nashville/Middle Tennessee Santas ~ South Carolina Santas ~ Triangle Santa Buddies

## Mid-East

Colonial Santas ~ Garden State Santas ~ Heart of Virginia Jolly Old Elves & Friends ~ New Jersey Santas ~ Pocono Santas ~ Santas of the Mid-Atlantic ~ South Shore Santas ~ You Sleigh Me

## **North East**

Lower Hudson Valley Santas ~ New England Santa Society ~ New York City





## From the Desk of

## Stephen P. Arnold, President/CEO

Whew! What a tough year and Christmas season we've just wrapped up. I pray that each of you who contracted the virus has survived with little or no lasting repercussions, and that those who were fortunate enough to avoid infection will continue to practice the CDC, State, and local guidelines, designed to do our best to



stay well and not spread it to more people. Too, I'm hopeful that the distribution of vaccines can be sped up and that those results can actually get our country and the economy back on solid footing.

IBRBS suffered a regrettable drop in membership as some of you decided you didn't need us, since you were not working and had no need for a background check or insurance. We'd like to remind you that IBRBS operates on a very small and tight budget, with as little overhead as possible, and we return a substantial portion of every dues payment to the membership in perks and programs. When membership continued to surge in 2019/20, we added more benefits, including adding two additional Christmas School scholarships and one additional Higher Education scholarship, and we have kept those in place for 2020/21 in hopes that, as the dust settles, many of you will see the value of belonging to a dynamic, prestigious, and nurturing organization that furthers the professional nature of our industry. It's not too late to become a full, active member again and still participate in most of our programs.

If you haven't visited <a href="https://IBRBSantas.org">https://IBRBSantas.org</a> (and hopefully soon a shortened URL: IBRBS.org) then you haven't discovered the new, exciting, easier to navigate website. Now the private side of the site contains members-only pages with important facts about IBRBS. The public site is easier to click through and it provides location assistance to our 50 affiliated Chapters and their contact information, and to discover more information on our organization in an effort to expand our membership. Too, it has a much more thorough membership application, which speeds up the verification process and also now accommodates Associate Memberships by Christmas community performers. The latest announcements are in the left hand margin and are shared to our IBRBSantas Facebook page and our Instagram and Twitter accounts.

Full active members should have recently received the 2021-2024 Board of Directors ballot. We have four candidates anxious to become more involved with our organization and represent each member during Board and Committee meetings. They each presented for your review, their experience, personal opinions, and their take on how to do their best job for you. Please exercise your membership rights and obligation to help guide the organization.

We hope you are ready to get re-excited about the ISC2022 Atlanta, now scheduled for April 28 to May 1, 2022. Plans include a revision of the website, listing of a revised workshop schedule, a new entertainment plan, an introduction of new sponsors, and taking care of the rollover tickets and resale of tickets from those who cancelled their planned attendance. Too, we will be designing some new event memorabilia.

Hang in there as we all face continued hardships and threats to our health and financial well-being. While this isn't going away any time soon, we all exhibited terrific creativity in securing opportunities to bring the best of the Christmas spirit to the public at large. We may never return to "normal", but the new normal can be a wonderful experience and rewarding too.

Stephen Arnold, President/CEO

Stephen lives in Memphis, TN with his wife Kate. He is a member of the Mid-Southern Santa Society and has been an IBRBS member since 2013.



stephen Amoid, President/CEO



## REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

by Fred Selinsky



appy New Year or should I have said "Glad 2020 is behind us." Every new year has its challenges, and this year will be no different. We still have the virus to get through and nev hope in our future. I, for one, am looking for Christmas 2021 to have some sort of "new" normalcy. In the meantime, we have work to do.

Starting in February, we have board elections. This year, we have three candidates running fc election and one candidate running for re-election. These elections are especially important to the IBRBS community because the men and women elected to the board are your voice; the represent you to the Christmas community. Board members and volunteers put in countles numbers of hours working for you. Every board member is trying to work toward building this organization to be a pinnacle of effectiveness in the business community. We have come so fa with just the support of members and our volunteers; we have so much more to accomplish Businesses and cities have taken notice of our accomplishments and I get daily requests from them to get on board. I do not expect everyone to be on board with what we do and how we d it, but let it be known "We do it for you."

This spring, if the weather and COVID-19 permit, we will be having our biennial face-to-face board meeting. We will gather for about 16 hours of intense interaction, discussing our future strategies and working out some of our weak points. Also, it will give us some social time to get acquainted with each other. I have said "You really don't know a person until you can sit face to face and look into their eyes."

I encourage everyone to vote and get involved, just hearing from you is appreciated. Have a joyous, healthy and prosperous new year.

Respectfully,

Fred Selinsky, IBRBS Chairman of the Board

Fred lives in Sun City, AZ with his wife Chery, and dogs Lucy and Chance. He is on the Board of the affiliated Arizona Santas, Mrs. Claus and Elves Chapter and has been an IBRBS member since 2013.



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## YOUR VOICE...YOUR VOTE...YOUR FUTURE

oting for your Board of Directors is one of the most important tasks for IBRBS members, with your vote shaping the future of the organization. Ballots are sent via email to all Full members, with voting taking place February 1-15. The newly elected Board members will then be seated at the March 10 Board of Directors meeting to begin their three-year term.

IBRBS staggers the number of open positions each year to ensure continuity, typically with thre -four open positions. The Candidate nomination process opens annually on September 1 and remains open to all Full Members until November 15. Open positions result when a sitting Director has fulfilled their three-year term, or a Director resigns or vacates the Board before their three-year term ends. For the 2021 election, the Election Committee received four candidate nominations for four open Director positions.



Stephen Arnold (TN)

Read Stephen's
Candidate Statement



Blake Ellege (NC)

Read Blake's
Candidate Statement



Jim Kelly, Sr. (NJ)

Read Jim's Candidate
Statement



Amanda Spalding (KY)

Read Amanda's
Candidate Statement

## IMPORTANT DATES ON THE IBRBS CALENDAR

You can see what's ahead on the IBRBS Calendar from your Member Dashboard.

February	March	April
<ul> <li>⇒ Board of Directors Election</li> <li>⇒ Santa's Heart Survey Opens</li> <li>⇒ Christmas Connections Published</li> <li>⇒ Christmas School Scholarship Applications</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>⇒ New Board Seated</li> <li>⇒ ISC2022 Registration</li> <li>⇒ Christmas School Scholarship Applications</li> </ul>	⇒ Christmas School Scholarships Close



## CANDIDATE STATEMENT: STEPHEN ARNOLD



Stephen Arnold (TN)

Hello fellow members of IBRBS, the world's largest and finest organization of Santas and Mrs. Clauses! I hope by now that most of you know me – for all the right reasons. I am Santa Stephen Arnold (aka Fabled Santa) and I am asking each of you to vote to return me to the IBRBS Board of Directors for three more years of volunteer service. With your blessings, I have been fortunate to have been allowed to serve each of you for the last six years as a Director on the current IBRBS Board, and as an Officer, working as your President/CEO for the last 2.5 years, and as your National Secretary for 2.5 years prior to that.

IBRBS has come a long way in the last eight years, and particularly as we welcomed our Mrs. Clauses and wives in 2016. We still have much to do to continue to retain ou title as the premier Christmas Performer Community. I hope you have found that, while servin on the Board and as an Officer, I have had positive influences on our recent progress. I hav many ideas as yet to propose and I look forward to working with three new Board members wit fresh ideas, as they and I represent your points of view. The steps we've taken, and new concepts yet to be introduced, should help continue our record growth, while we can furthe enhance the programs and services IBRBS already offers our members.

While serving you during my past six years on the Board, I have been involved in helping creat and manage many of IBRBS's many respected programs, designed to further the professionalism of our members. I am gratified to see the way these programs have bee supported by you, our members, and how many of you have supported IBRBS by volunteerin for committee positions. By the time you read this bio, we will have installed a new, fresh, an much easier to navigate IBRBSantas.org website, now being co-managed by member Santa John Arnold.

I believe that IBRBS should continue to reach out to Christmas Performers everywhere and w now welcome Associate Members to participate in our volunteer committees, as authorized b our Bylaws. We see promise for significant growth through support for Chapters as you, ou enthusiastic members, evangelize the benefits of belonging. IBRBS can best provide counse from our collective experience and use our power of a sizable membership to maintain an improve services, such as insurance and background checks, scholarships, and our member resources division for all our members, at the best values possible.

I thank each of you for the opportunity to have served these last six years. I have worke tirelessly, countless hours each week for IBRBS members. I hope to continue to help guide ou community of performers to be more professional and maintain our civility to each other. humbly ask every member to cast your vote for me, allowing me the privilege to continue t serve three more years.



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## CANDIDATE STATEMENT: BLAKE ELLEGE



Blake Ellege (NC)

Known within the Christmas Performer community as Appalachian Santa, I am also a professional entertainer, performer, actor, and recording artist from Brevard, N.C. I am very blessed that 2020 will be my 11th year portraying Santa Claus and my 3rd year portraying Santa at the Professional Level. With my over 20 years of International Award-Winning work as an entertainer and character actor, I have also spent that same amount of time working in the Fine Arts Industry. At an early age, I began working for a Nationally known Music Festival nestled in the mountains of WNC as an account manager providing seasonal memberships, benefit packages, managing legacy accounts, and as well as helping spearhead yearly fundraising

campaigns that provided scholarships to 3/4 of the attending students. As the years progressed I managed a full-scale luxury boutique accommodations provider for almost 9 years; booking and planning all large special events, processing and securing corporate buy-outs, and working closely with the local Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Board. I believe that my many years of employment and work in industries that were based on customer dependent interaction and communication have given me some of the best tools I can have as a communicator and liaison learning to help promptly resolve many situations and further the goals of my employers.

One of my goals as a Board Member for IBRBS will be to foster the growth of the organization. The growth of IBRBS, in reality, will not only be dependent on the retention of current member but also dependent on outreach geared to younger potential members and performers. Give my background and experience, I believe that I can help bridge the gap into this new territory c recruitment and membership increase. IBRBS has always been a special part of my life and it success has always been in my best interests. With that being said, I have served as a volunteer on the 2018-19 Election Committee and was elected its Chair and will be serving on the ISC2022 Committee coordinating workshops. IBRBS is a wonderful organization that helps man Christmas Performers in all stages and levels of experience and from every backgroun imaginable. It is that same fostering of creativity, love, and community, that IBRBS has alread established that can be expounded upon and given new and fresh perspective from new boar members and new members alike. It is my hope that, with your support for my candidacy, I can bring that to the Board of IBRBS. I would appreciate your vote and I thank you for your consideration.





## CANDIDATE STATEMENT: JIM KELLY, SR.



Jim Kelly, Sr. (NJ)

As an adult my life has revolved around the well-being of children. My 37 years in education, with over 20 years as a supervisor of Science and my five years as a professional Christmas performer have given me unique qualifications for this position. As a former supervisor in charge of more than 50 teachers, I have practical experience in establishing goals, training, communicating, and programs. I also was the treasurer for the East Brunswick Principals and Supervisors Association for five years. Those positions also included projecting needs, budgeting for said needs, and proper ordering. This required all sides of the budgeting and procurement process, including fulfilling required audits.

As a Leader in the Local BSA Pack and Troop going on 30 years, I have served as Den Leade Assistant Cubmaster, Cubmaster, Assistant Scoutmaster, Scoutmaster, Committee member, an Committee chairperson. These positions again required interpersonal skills and well as th administrative duties listed above.

Growth in any organization is attained by communication and determination. Without constar attention, i. e., electronic promotion, expansion of value to members and extensive member retention program, any group will wither and fall away. As a supervisor of teachers I have developed a full repertoire of social skills, especially in the area for conflict resolution. In over 2 years I can't recall receiving more than a few calls, from parents who were not dissatisfied with something. Resolving issues and bringing people together were a hallmark of my tenure. The key to this was providing an open door policy that had issues solved when they were small Communication is key.

As a Professional Santa I have experience in TV, Photo shoots, Party events, Health care Preschool, and home visits. I have appeared at the French Consulate in NYC and this year set u my own home studio for over 300 Zoom calls. My most rewarding visits were for charity event such as Secret Sleigh Project, where I visited differently-abled children in comfortable surroundings adapted to their needs.

As a founding member of the Garden State Santas, IBRBS affiliate, we have held meetings for social and training purposes, including an American Signing lesson (short version for Sant visits). I also was gravely disappointed at the postponement of the ISC2020 due to the pandemic; I look forward to the rescheduled event. As an elected member of the board I loo forward to assisting in this event in every way possible. Having attended two Schools for Sant events I find events like these to be extremely informative and invaluable. The social aspect als cannot be undervalued. I urge anyone able to attend, to do so.

The Pandemic and Post-Pandemic era of this organization will be pivotal in our growth. In closing, I have always planned, gathered input, researched issues, and devised plans i conjunction with colleagues for the success of every group I have been associated with.



## CANDIDATE STATEMENT: AMANDA SPALDING



Amanda Spalding (KY)

As 2020 has taught us, joy and hope are something we all need, and as a Christmas Community, we are in a very special position to bring it to others, as well as ourselves. Being Mrs. Claus had given me the opportunity to give back to my local community. Seeing the joy in the eyes of children of every age is magical and special. It's a sacred privilege.

I am running for the IBRBS Board of Directors to help our community continue to grow and share our collective wisdom. In this past year, numerous opportunities have either presented themselves or have risen to the forefront of our lives. Mrs. Claus is coming of age! While we have

known this, Goldie Hawn, Duluth Trading Company, and Marks & Spencer have shown the worl that Mrs. Claus is unique and magical in her own way and can both complement Santa and stan on her own. She will have her own set of challenges and opportunities. As an organization, w need to respond to her growing popularity.

We have seen the potential that technology has to offer our community, enabling us to reac more children of all ages, especially those who are in situations that prevent them fror experiencing Christmas Magic. Diversity and inclusion are also topics that are essential t address. Fostering our own health is essential to our ability to continue doing what we love; an by doing this, we can be an example to others. How we respond to these opportunities wi shape how our organization grows in the years to come.

I've been an active Mrs. Claus for four years and have participated in numerous workshops and trainings. I bring 23 years as a Registered Nurse, specializing in long term care, education, an financial recoupment. Prior to becoming a nurse, I was proud to serve as a Photographers Mat in the United States Navy. My education includes a Bachelors in Nursing and Psychology and Masters in Health Care Administration.

The Christmas Community is built on servant leadership; after all, how many people mak millions of toys to give away! Serving this community would be an honor and a privilege.





## **IBRBS News and Updates**



We celebrate the life and contributions of Ron Robertson, President Emeritus, who proudly served IBRBS and the Christmas community. Ron passed January 20, 2021 in California, and we will all miss him dearly. A celebration of his life will be held when it's safe to congregate. Our prayers and condolences are with his wife Barbara, his family, and all who loved him.

Thank you Santa!

#### Now Accepting Christmas School Scholarship Applications

Each year, IBRBS awards up to eight, \$250 scholarships for members to attend a qualified Christmas School, including in-person, online, and home-based programs. Christmas School scholarships are a valued member benefit to grow and develop your skills as a Christmas character.



Applications close April 30, 2021

Visit your member dashboard to learn more.

## **NEW WEBSITE PUBLISHED!**



To kick off the new year, we launched the new website on January 1. Easier to navigate, more information, and a fresher, cleaner look.

Visit the website and see what's there!

#### SANTA'S HEART PROGRAM SURVEY OPEN

You can now access the 2020 Santa's Heart Survey from your Member Dashboard.



#### **ISC2022 ATLANTA**



The committee will reconvene in February to pick up and move forward. We expect to announce updates to registration, hotel reservations, workshops, vendors, merchandise, and much more in the coming weeks. If you haven't joined the <a href="ISC Facebook page">ISC Facebook page</a>, you can catch all the updates there as well.



## HOW DID YOU DO THAT? By Santa Pat de Haan

am often asked what my fondest memory is of all the Christmas events we have produced over the past 34 years and thousands of children we have served. We created our nonprofit to specifically serve homeless, impoverished, and special needs children. We also serve medically fragile and terminally ill children and families of our deployed troops. Given those populations, we have no shortage of memorable and emotionally charged stories to share. This is my favorite because of its simplicity.

December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005 found us setting up for our annual Christmas event, The Homeless Christmas Tree. We had taken over the entire memorial park at the state capitol complex. We had six carnival rides, fifteen activities, food distribution, and even a petting zoo ready for the 500 homeless children expected to attend for the day. My area was "Santa's Toyland." The children would enter, visit with me (Santa), have their picture taken, and then I would send them into the adjacent toy area where they could choose whatever toy they wanted (one toy per child).

After a couple hours of nonstop children, I was interrupted by a woman's voice calling, "Santa! Santa!" I looked over and saw one of the teachers standing with a 9-year-old boy who was crying. I



Elf Kelley

went over to them and asked what was wrong. I thought maybe the child had hurt himself. I asked the boy what was wrong. The teacher explained that he had his heart set on a basketball and there weren't any more left.

I told the boy there must be some mistake because I most certainly did not forget him. I told him

to go back into Toyland and tell the tall elf with the funny hat what happened. Her name is Kelley and I bet she can help you. He smiled and followed the teacher back into the toy area. What they didn't know



was that Kelley is my daughter and at 6'2" she's an avid basketball player. They also didn't know we had over a hundred basketballs stored behind there. They just had not been displayed in Toyland yet.

Kelley told me later what happened. As the boy approached her, she went to him and asked what is wrong. She could tell he was sad and had been crying. He explained that he couldn't find the toy he wanted. She asked what that toy was, and he said a basketball. "Oh," she said, "I love basketball. It's my favorite sport!" This led into a conversation between the two about basketball. At the end of the conversation, Kelley asked the boy which team was his favorite. "I love the Lakers!" the boy quickly responded. Kelley told him her favorite team is the Suns, but they are both good teams. Then she told him Santa had left a special present for him but had hidden it so nobody else could take it.

About ten minutes later, I heard a woman's voice loudly calling out to me, "Santa! Santa!" When I turned around to see who it was, I saw the same teacher and boy standing there. This time, the teacher was crying.

"How did you do that?" she exclaimed pointing towards the boy. He was standing there with the biggest, happiest smile I'd ever seen in my life. In his hands he held an official Lakers basketball. Again she asked, "How did you do that?"

Without any hesitation I responded, "I'm Santa Claus. That's what I do."

This indeed is what every Santa has the power and ability to do. There is magic in that red suit you put on. Acknowledge it and use it wisely. Your hugs can provide comfort to those who are afraid and in pain. Your attention can strengthen the self-concept of those who feel alone and unwanted. Your encouragement can guide those who are lost and discouraged. It's in every one of us. The choice is ours.



Editor's Note: Many members had an unexpectedly awesome season, and we asked you to share your experiences.



Santa Andy Farr (CO) - Rocky Mountain Santas



Santa Kelly Ford (OK) -Oklahoma Santas



Santa Tom Dubreuil (PA) -Pocono Santas



Santa John Fleeger

So as I try to reclaim some sort of season this year, I've found myself doing more shoots that could qualify as commercials – requires considerably less contact. Even shot my first scripted video with the local Chamber of Commerce. My barber had asked that Santa come in for beard maintenance and a boot shine and they would get some pictures for their Facebook. I just happen to have a photographer buddy that was looking for a project like this. Needless to say, there's a whole series of Santa getting a straight razor shave and beard trim. But more importantly, the barbers invited their youngest clients to come in during Santa's appointment. The attached photo chokes me up every time I look at it – the true reason we all put on the red suit.



Santa Tom Carmody (CO) - Rocky Mountain Santas





Santa John Condon and Elf Jingle (NJ)



Santa Tom Bailey (VA) -Colonial Santas



Santa Brian DeTuro (NJ)



Santa Bill Miller (HI)



Santa Charles Adler (NY) - NYC Santas and Mrs. Claus



Santa Michael Suggs (GA)
Photography credit: Urso Photography

The season was obviously different with many in-person visits cancelling but those were, in many cases, replaced by virtual visits. I was skeptical of the virtual visits at first, but they turned out to be almost as much fun as the in-person visits. Definitely missed the hugs, but I believe the children had more fun because Santa was their captive for just a little while. There was no pressure on them to remember what they wanted and they were in the comfort of their own homes so they were more at ease. I think virtual visits are here to stay and that's ok. I was able to work from the comfort of my own home as well.









Santa Dave and Mrs. Claus Dianne Bell (VA) - Colonial Santas, Virginia Santas, and Heart of Virginia Photography credit: Butler Portraits

Santa Dave Bell (VA) shares this bittersweet experience.

Today, I was visited by a party consisting of a middle-aged man, a middle-aged woman, two teenage boys, an energetic yellow Labrador, and an older chocolate Lab who was struggling to limp on only three legs. Our photo setup requires being seated on a bench in front of Santa. The yellow Lab hopped right onto the bench. The two boys gingerly picked up the chocolate Lab and laid her on the bench then sat on either side of her.

I must have looked at them quizzically as the man explained that they were on their way to the vet to put down their beloved chocolate Lab "Princess." With tear-filled eyes and a choked voice, the lady explained that Princess had cancer and was in a lot of pain, but they wanted one last picture of her with Santa before they had to take her on that last, final drive. After the family got all the pictures they wanted, I asked if I could hold Princess.

There I stood, holding a 75-pound much-loved dog with tears streaming down my face as Princess slowly licked them away—her tongue going right around my face shield. The entire family was crying about as hard as Santa and the elves. After I returned Princess to the family, I had to leave to 'feed Santa's reindeer' so I could wash my face before seeing the next child.

Santa provides unconditional love and understanding as well as, sometimes, healing.



Santa Adam Woodworth (IL)

Photography credit: Photography by Angel

It was a strange season, but it really forced me and the families I serve to think about new ways to safely do a Santa visit. I worked with an amazing photographer who worked her clients, as well as me, to create some magic. While I was masked in most of her photos, the cropping of many of the images became an artistic journey to capture the mystery of Santa. There was a lot of high praise bestowed upon her by her clients and others for "making this work." This shoot was early in the season so I took some of these tips and used them.





Santa Don Osborne (TN) - Middle **Tennessee Santas** Photography credit: Clark Photography



Santa Ron Dantzler (GA)



Santa Bob Middlebrook and Mrs. Claus Linda (WA) NORPAC



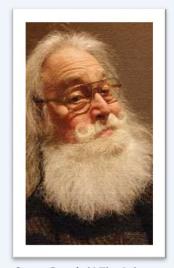
John Fleeger (OH)



Santa David Hardwick (WA) - NORPAC



Santa Bob Green (IL) with 'Graham'



Santa Butch (AZ) - Arizona Santas, Mrs. Claus and Elves



Santa Larry Angell (ID)

Q. What do reindeer say before they tell you a joke?

A. This one's gonna SLEIGH you!

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Santa Travis Norman (UT) - Utah Santas

This little girl was special for me. Her dad is in the Airforce here at Hill Airforce Base in Utah, and she had just got out of primary children's hospital. She had a feeding tube in her belly and a tube in her throat. She had heart surgery, she was only two weeks out of the hospital and her father asked me when he saw me on base if I was Santa and if I would be willing to take pictures with his daughter. I told him no problem that's what I live for, I told him to meet me at my studio and we will do some pictures together. I had just gotten done with my Santa live show and I spent some special time with the family and took a few pictures.



Santa Bob and Mrs. Claus Pam Smith (NJ) - NYC Santas Photography credit: Gary Franco

We did a combination of Zoom and JingleRing visits this year for the first time. Only 125 in all, but we mixed in a socially distant tree lighting, outdoor home visit and several other outdoor gigs. Everyone had a great time, and there were more tips than usual.

The highlight was that Santa and Mrs. Claus fell in love all over again!



Santa Harlan Plagmann (GA)



Santa Laureate Bill Wilson and Bestemor Claus Judi Broderick (WI) - Wisconsin Santas



Santa Tim Taylor (OH) - Heart of Ohio







Santa Ken Markus (CO)

I consider this to be a successful year. With the support of the Old Colorado City Merchant's Association, Santa was able to be seen by hundreds of children that may not otherwise have had the opportunity, and we were COVID-19 safe. There is a 6x4 foot plexiglass shield between Santa and the visitors, no laps but lots of high-fives. Edge-on the shield is invisible, and we ran UV-C sanitation lights between visitors. Six feet between Santa and the outer edge of the workbench, and thanks to warm weather we were able to leave the cabin doors open for air flow. With thermometer and alcohol wipes in hand, our Elf Robin was able to help keep everyone safe and healthy, and with our photographers we were able to give smiles and pleasant memories of this year.



Santa Terry Webb (AL) - Cotton State Santas and Texas State Santas



Santa Ron Bronson (TN) - Nashville/Middle
Tennessee Santas
Photography credit: Big Event Photography



Santa Jerry Czubinski (TX) - Texas State Santas



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## SAFE SANTA SNOW GLOBE VISITS FOR 2020

## BY Mrs. Claus Betty Mocik-Motter

igh-fives, Reindeer Macarena games, and lots of singing were just a few of the fun things enjoyed by all at the 2020 Santa Snow Globe visits of Santa and Mrs. B. Claus of Atlanta, Georgia. Along with all that the children got to tell Santa what their heart's desire was for Christmas!

There were more than just a few parents who walked away from the family visit at the Snow Globe literally in tears, thanking Santa and Mrs. Claus for coming and making it such a safe, creative, and personal family visit; especially given the trying times dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. One dad whispered, "Thank God for you two. My wife and I didn't know what we were going to do with the kids for Christmas this year. My wife's heart was breaking to think the kids wouldn't get to see Santa. This is so much more than we ever expected or had hoped for. Thank you."

Credit goes to Kathryn Burgess of Richmond, Virginia for coming up with the incredibly creative idea and the adorable story telling of how Santa and Mrs. Claus got stuck inside the Snow Globe until Christmas Eve. Anyone wanting to visit with the Clauses until then, had to do so from the Snow Globe. The children were most receptive of the story, which came with a full color storybook, signed by the author!

Safety was unparalleled, as Santa and Mrs. Claus were completely encapsulated in a 12' X 7' pop-up vinyl tent with two "escape" doors, and a pair of roll-up areas for ventilating. In between each family visit with Santa, there were elves disinfecting the surface of the globe. The families in waiting were kept at safe distances between each other. All were masked, as they waited in line for their visit at the globe.

Santa and Mrs. Claus went from side to side inside of the globe to maintain a smooth and steady flow of visits. No one was rushed. There was plenty of time allowed for conversations and photographs. But most importantly, fun was had by all!

Mrs. B. tells us that most visits were two hours in length. The HOA said it was more than sufficient, as they either booked time slots for families or had elves reading Kathryn Burgess' book prior to individual family visits at the globe with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Books were for sale at the event, as well.

Virtual visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus were offered for 2020 and were fun as well, but Mrs. B. relayed, "The Snow Globe visits were a much bigger hit than the virtual visits."

Betty lives in Marietta, GA, is President of the affiliated Peachtree Santas Chapter, and has been an IBRBS member since 2017.





#### SAVED BY SANTA

Reprinted from <u>Crescenta Valley Weekly</u>

By Mary O'KEEFE

A year ago local resident Mario Licu parked in the Big Lots parking lot in La Cañada preparing for a normal day of shopping, but the day did not go exactly as planned.

"It just happened by chance that, as I walked through the parking lot, I noticed a shopping cart heading down the [hill] straight for traffic," he said.

The shopping cart was not empty; there was a small child in the child seat and his mother was yelling as she helplessly watched the cart roll toward Foothill Boulevard.

"The mother was pregnant, and hysterical," Licu said.

Licu rushed to stop the cart before it got to the street. He pushed the cart back to a grateful mother.

"She was still crying and thanked me over and over again," he said.

Licu made certain the child and mom were okay, then went into the store to shop.

"When I came out of the store, she had left a note on the car door thanking me again," he said.

At first he didn't think much about it but over the last year he thought of the child often, replaying the incident in his head.

"I wished I knew how to reach out to [his mother]," he said.

Licu is known to many as Santa Mario because he is a professional Santa Claus who works at several local venues, including the Los Angeles Zoo. He wanted to find out how the child was doing and also wanted to invite the family to the LA Zoo.

"I also work at private parties, other [venues] and occasionally fill in at the Americana," he said.

Every place he went, he always had this little toddler and his mom in the back of his mind hoping to see them again.

Then a few months after that encounter he parked his distinguished vehicle, a red car with a reindeer nose, in a parking lot in the 700 block of Foothill Boulevard to get something to eat.

"When I came out there was a note on my car from the mom, introducing herself and thanking me again," he said.

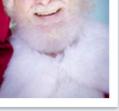
Unfortunately he did not have a way to contact her.

Then a few days ago, she walked into Massage Envy where he works part time. Now they have exchanged names and contact information and he has found out that the young boy is doing fine, as is the entire family.

> There is a Chinese proverb that states if you save someone's life you are responsible for that life. In a way Licu agrees; he feels a connection with the family and is glad he can now follow how they are doing.

Mary O'Keefe





Mario Licu (CA)



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## **CLAUS IN THE NEWS!**

Opa Claus Bo and Mrs. Claus Jeanne Turner (OK)

Oklahoma Santas



## COVID CLAUS: How Some OKLAHOMA-BASED SANTAS ARE ADAPTING TO COVID-19

Reprinted from The O'Colly

By Ellen Slater

Published Dec. 25, 2020

Over the age of 65, a little rounder around the belly and constantly surrounded by kids.

Those characteristics might ring a bell of qualities that put one at most risk for COVID-19. Or, they might remind you of the characteristics of Jolly Old Saint Nick. The men who bring the spirit of Christmas, and are Santa to children all around the world, are the ones most at risk, but also hold one of the most important jobs of the season.

One Oklahoma Santa in particular, who goes by Santa Opa Claus in the Christmas community, is one of the many Santas who are at a higher risk this holiday season. He recently had an artificial heart valve put in which potentially puts him at risk for contracting COVID-19. The juggle of keeping himself and the community around him safe, while still keeping the magic of Christmas alive, has made this holiday season unique from any others for him.

Santa Opa Claus says while he is just as busy this season, there are things that are different. Opa and

(Continued on page 22)



Santa Tom and Mrs. Claus Shirley Heeter (NC)

## SANTA AND MRS. CLAUS PORTRAYERS ADJUST AMID PANDEMIC

Reprinted from <u>Spectrum News</u>.

By Taylor Neuman | Burlington

Published Nov. 22, 2020

BURLINGTON, N.C. – Usually at this time of the year, Santa portrayers take to malls, parades, and festivals to spread some Christmas cheer. Sadly, this year, all of those events have been canceled, putting portrayers out of jobs.

Tom Heeter and his wife, Shirley, have been dressing up as Mr. and Mrs. Claus for the past 10 years, and have participated in many parades, many of which have been canceled this year. So in light of these cancellations, the couple decided to have a parade of their own in their neighborhood in Burlington.

"This year we have turned down over 60 events because I'm afraid we could have a child sit on my lap who has the coronavirus but doesn't know it, he gets off my lap and I'm sitting there giving it to the rest of the kids. I'm not worried about myself, I'm worried about spreading it to the other children," Tom says.

Tom built a sleigh specifically for the parade, so he and his wife could say "hello" to neighbors in a socially distant way. Some residents walked in the parade, handing out candy and gifts to children in the neighborhood, they also were joined by fire trucks and ambulances.



(Continued from page 21)

the photographer that he works with came up with a system where the families can choose from levels of green, yellow, or red, depending on how comfortable they are with their interaction with Santa. The levels range from everyone wearing masks without sitting on his lap, all the way to complete normalcy without even wearing masks. What might come to a surprise for some is that Opa says that most families opt for the maskless level.

Opa has also done virtual visits as well, but describes them as not as successful as in-person visits.

"I did one the other day with a daycare," Opa describes. "I ended up with 15 children trying to talk to me. It was a bit confusing."

There have been many things that the world has adapted to during the pandemic that will stick around post-pandemic, but Opa is not sure if that is the case with virtual Santa visits.

"You never know [if the virtual Santa visits will stick around after the pandemic ceases.] I have come to find that this industry changes like the weather."

Describing the job as a "calling," Sooner Santa is another Oklahoman who spends his career portraying Santa and bringing cheer to all.

Sooner Santa says that his season has looked different from others due to the ongoing pandemic. Even with the virus still spreading rapidly around the state and country, families will request for Santa to not act as if that is the case. He says that few families request masks or face shields in his visits.

"The children and their parents are starving for some normalcy," says Sooner Santa. "Most people want the 'normal' Santa experience. . . sitting on Santa's lap, telling Santa their wish for Christmas and I've been happy to provide that."

Sooner Santa says he still takes precautions such as taking extra vitamin C and changing his gloves often, but classifies himself as younger on the scale of typical Santas and does not have any major health concerns, making him feel comfortable giving these children the "normal" Santa experience.

Sooner Santa is the vice president of the International Brotherhood of Real Beard Santas. (Editor's note: Sooner Santa is not VP of IBRBS.)

Most Santas are connected with others in this profession. The International Brotherhood of Real Beard Santas, IBRBS, is an organization that many take part in. They meet four times a year, host workshops (also known as Santa School), and distinguish their brand by doing background checks and having high standards of being a reliable Santa.

Because of the IBRBS, they get to lean on each other in times of the Santa season being flipped upside down due to the pandemic. OKC Santa, another Oklahoma based Santa is a member.

"Many Santas reduced their appearances because they are at high risk due to being over 65, overweight, and other risk factors," says OKC Santa. "Mrs. Claus was not thrilled that I did so much work without masks, but she completely understands why I do it."

OKC Santa says that he did do more Zoom work this year, as well as pre-recorded messages.

The Santas that are found at the malls, holiday parties, and photoshoots alike might be taking precautions this season, but thankfully Dr. Fauci, the physician that has been leading the US through the pandemic, wants children to know that he already gave the "real Santa" the vaccine, so they have nothing to worry about.





## Members and Chapters



## January 16, 2021 | MidSouthern Santa Society

Another great 'virtual' meeting of the MidSouthern Santa Society. We voted to postpone our annual February family celebration and dinner until our members can safely meet without fear of COVID.

## January 15, 2021 | Enchanted Santas of New Mexico

We had some great discussions about how everyone did this season with responses from people who did home visits, to mall visits. It was particularly interesting to talk to those who did malls and how the COVIC protocols were compromised so that Santas could talk to children. We were very happy that no one from the Chapter got sick because of it.

The Chapter is reorganizing with Ron McLamb taking over the leadership of the Chapter. We ended with the Chapter looking for ways they can better serve the community in the area.



Santa Vern and Mrs. Claus Ellen—Idaho Santas



Santa Greg Gimpier— Idaho Santas

A memorable moment. This young boy was not expected to live but a couple years, yet he has defied the odds. He is unable to move or speak. I hope he felt some joy with his visit from Santa.



Santa Larry Angell—Idaho Santas



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# CHRISTMAS CLASSICS Santa Magic Presents: Items to add Mystery

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You snow with four 9-inch slik scarves, All different colors. In a wink, they blend into a 36-inch full color Santa Claus. This is the most beautiful Santa Claus silk ever in the magic market Use it with the children change the silks to the Santa using

a change bag.

## a Magical Presentation

on the page. And at the end of the story, just as they appeared in the beginning the words and images will disappear before their very eyes.

If you are a Santa, Mis. Claus, or an Elf who wishes to enhance your storytelling repertoire and become the highlight of the night with a magnal presentation of Tives the Night Before Christmas\*, order your copy today ... before they disappear!

## Santa Claus Book of Secrets & Year Glass (Naughty or Nice?)



All of the miraculous happenings that contribute towards making Christmas the most remarkable time of the year are. finally to be revealed to the world in this beautifully Illustrated book many mysteries are answered by Santa Claus himself, as he finally decides to unlock the startling truth behind one of the worlds most marvelous mysteries...Christmas.

The Year Glass is a replica of

your child's from the Hall of Records at the North Pole. Use the Year Glass to monitor their Naughty and Nice balance and ensure their name appears on the nice list.



this four foot scarf changes instantly from multicolor to black and back again. This works amazingly when used with "Iwas the Night Before Christmas, a Magkai Presentation!" when pulled though the book while making your pictures appear. reverse to take the color out of the book and extend your presentation.

## The Grinch's Nuts and Bolts



Santa has a hard enough time making sure that all the toys are put together for all the children in the world without having to worry about the Grinch! That mean green fella sent a supply of nuts and bolts to the elves that just won't stay together. It does not matter how many times a person buts the bolt on it, it just continues to fall apart. A really funny story about the problems Santa has to deal with at the North Pole. Esceptionally easy self working magic that will amaze children and adults

#### **Deluxe Change Bag**

This is a great change bag that works well with any type of magical production. Whether your want to change a coin into a matchbox car, or a lump of coal to a



candy cane, this will handle all of it. It looks exactly like a Christmas stocking. I use it with shorking mitters for that last reduction of size along with an elf that magically appears to help me.

Santa's Magic Snow

How do you make a true Christmas Miracle occur?

Well ask no more, now that you have Santa's Magic

Snow! Take two Styrofoam cups out of your bag.

While stacked ask for it to be filled with ice, since it

is cold in December and for a glass, of water. Pour

the ice into a second Styrofoam oup to show that it

is just lice and add waper. As they sing or you tell

how you met Jack Frost, the

ice starts to rise in the cup and fall out. You flip the cup over, and snow, not water,

fails all over the table. They can touch it and it even feels

#### Coal to Gold

Coal to Gold (Ash to Ember) delivers the world's first color changing finger ring. Nothing like it. has ever been seen immagic until now.

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appear at your fingerties. You toss it freely from hand to hand; it twinkles and shines red, varishes and reappears at your fingertips.

under your gloves to be more magical at your

- These work great for putting a little Magic in



this and much more is

"T'was the Night Before Christmas, a Magical Presentation"



Santa loves cookies, but Mrs. Claus tries to keep him on a diet until his big ride. Pull a back or pack of Oreo cookies out of of you Santa Bag, take a big hite of of one then think better of it, afraid of what the Mrs. Will say if she

back onto the cookie, fully restored! Furl easy trick you can do with gloves on. home, malls, and school visits.

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T'was the Night Before Christmas,

Twas the Night Before Chrismas - A Magical Presentation" allows the storyteller to add another dimension to this classic tale. Children will see first-hand the magic of this book, as they watch blank pages transform before their cyes, liest with words, and then with images as they appear.

Everyone will say, "The only thing more magical than this book is the spirit of Christmas itself!"



A paperback edition of the famous A paperback entire to the stands.

A Chrismas Caroll by Charles
fickens is displayed. The book
contains almost 170 pages. The
performer rifles the pages of the
book with the pages facing the
spectrator. The spectrator stops the performer at any page and remembers the lifet word on that page. The performer can divine the every word.

## Vanishing Coke Bottle





liquid inside (you see it splashing) and it even has the real, rounded closed bottom. You cannot see any difference from an ordinary bottle even from one meter away, and even if you see it. from below. Yet, it disappears in the traditional way! The bottle is made. rom an original 1/2 litre Coke bottle.

The Christmas Wizard helped Santa out on this one!

You show a link of golden chain rings in your hands. You drop the top ring and it



to the bottom! You can hand the chain to the spectator, and eventually, they may be able to do the same if they are lucky! You take the chain back, and repeat the effect, but this time the ring fals. completely off and you place this in your pocket. You keep repeating this several times, then hand the chain back to the spectator. He will be unable to get the ring to fall off at all!

## Santa's Thumb Tips

imagine having a point of brilliant red light Dream it and Believe to All

possible, with the amazing Santa's Thumb tips? This item comes with 2 finger tips ... Put them on

## Santa's Oreos

caught you. Blow the bite

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Membership levels range from Free to Platinum. Gold is our most popular level.

## What do you receive as a Gold Member?

- You have immediate 24/7 access to 64 'on-demand' sessions (over 100 hours).
- You have the ability to attend the "Gold & Platinum Monthly Mentoring" sessions.
- You have the option to attend the NEW 10 "Core Sessions" that will be presented live in February, March & early April 2021, as well as access to these sessions 'on-demand.'
- You will receive a 'Certificate of Completion' when you complete the 'Core Sessions'.
- You have the right to display the Worldwide Santa Claus Network 'web badge' on your website and other marketing materials.
- You also receive access to a list of vendors, a copy of the booking agreement used by Santa Ed Taylor, sample marketing materials and other materials related to sessions and topics.

Is the membership for the calendar year, or for 12 months?

12 months.

#### What if I'm already a member of a lower membership level?

The unused portion of your current membership will be applied to your upgrade.

## Do you have a monthly payment option?

Yes, your 1-year membership can be paid at \$24 per month.

#### What do I need to access the sessions?

Any computer, tablet or smartphone with an Internet connection.

#### What if I'm not happy with my membership?

You can cancel your membership at any time and any unused balance will be refunded to you, no questions asked.

## What topics are covered in the Gold Membership?

The only topics NOT covered are those related to the Entertainment Industry (the deep-dive into the Entertainment Industry is included in the Platinum Level membership), but local TV appearances are covered in the Gold Level.

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See the current list of available sessions go to https://Worldwide-Santa-Claus-Network.com

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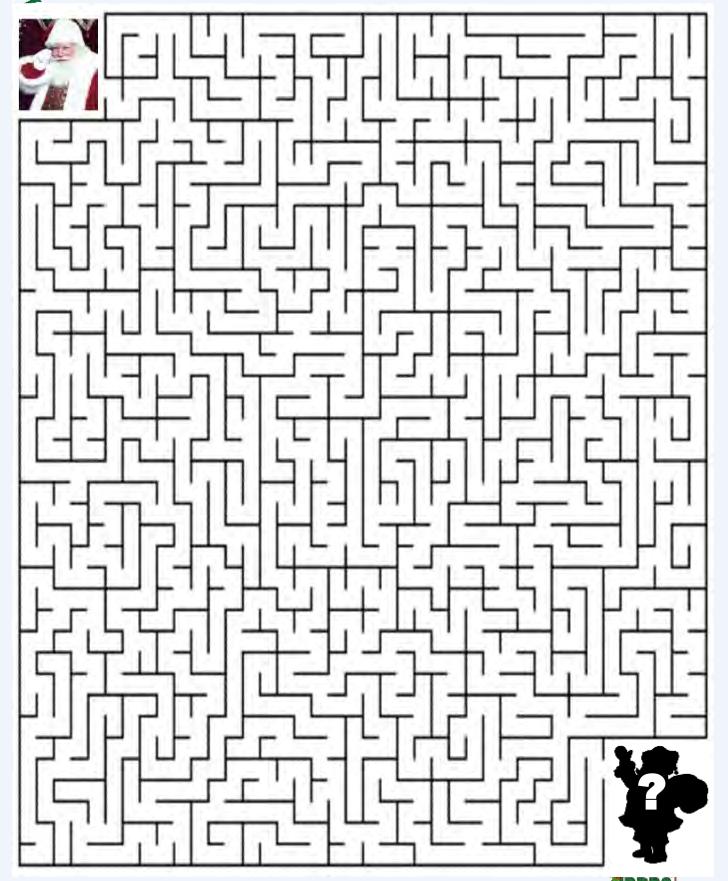
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## Help Tom Carmody Find New IBRBS Members



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# The Official Newsletter of IBRBS HRISTMAS CONNECTIONS





## Official Per Issue Rate Sheet 2018/19

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Half Page - Vertical or Horiz.	\$65.00	\$55.00	\$45.00	\$40.00
Quarter Page	\$45.00	\$40.00	\$30.00	\$25.00
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Classified Ad - 3 Lines of text	\$10.00	\$8.00	\$6.00	\$5.00

ISSUE	AD/ARTICLE DEADLINE	PUBLISH DATE
SPRING	APR 15	MAY 1
SUMMER	JUL 15	AUG 1
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WINTER	JAN 15	FEB 1

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