

Villager Enjoys Making People Smile as a Clown

Annemarie Prioriello is known as “Ravioli” with Clown Alley #179.

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By Kay Yaccarino

Despite being depicted in nightmare-inducing ways by the entertainment industry, many people still love a clown, and Clown Alley #179 is the perfect outlet for those who enjoy clowning around.

Annemarie “Ravioli” Prioriello is the president of the group today, but she didn’t aspire to be a clown until moving to The Villages 16 years ago.

“A friend in the Single Baby Boomers club needed someone who could sew because she needed a clown costume,” said Prioriello, of the Village Alhambra. “After I made one for her, I wanted one, too.”

An ancestry DNA test confirmed that she is 98% Italian, so the name “Ravioli” just came naturally.

“It’s a great way to have fun and to give back,” Prioriello said, as the group entertains regularly at nursing homes, schools, events, and for other clubs in The Villages.

Although they couldn’t perform last year due to the pandemic, the clowns did have a couple of golf cart parades, and they are happy their schedule is filling up again.

“I have nursing homes calling me now, and we’ve already got several booked,” Prioriello said. The group recently entertained at the charter school and at the Strawberry and St. Patrick’s Day festivals.

“We also do neighborhood shows,” she said, adding that the clowns work on their craft frequently, learning new skits.

Being a clown is more than just putting on a wig and makeup. Unless they have experience as a clown elsewhere, anyone who wants to join the club must attend a class first, either through The Enrichment Academy or one of the many offered around the state.

A group of 10 recent graduates will have to do a performance as their clown persona for the members prior to being inducted at the next Clown Alley meeting.

“I still go to camps and take courses to learn new things, and I go to the clown convention every year,” Prioriello said. When asked if that’s as crazy as it sounds, she laughs and says, “Yes!”

There are even classes in proper pie-throwing techniques, as the “pies” are not really made of whipped cream, the pie “tin” isn’t really a tin. There are specific ways to aim that clowns have to learn before they can throw a pie in someone’s face.

“There’s a real art to it,” Prioriello said, acknowledging that a lot of what they do sounds silly – because it is. Being able to take that silliness and inspire a smile or laughter is the art that the clowns perform – especially when they’re performing for a memory-care group or for children with cancer.

The most worthwhile part of being a clown is, “Being able to be the one person who can connect to someone through our songs or skits, and maybe spark a memory, or create a new one,” Prioriello said, adding that these interactions “are close to all of our clown hearts.”



Submitted photo
“Ravioli”, aka Annemarie Prioriello, is president of The Villages Clown Alley #179 whose members perform for nursing homes, clubs and at festivals throughout the year.