

Jolly soul

Smitty Smith, also known as Smitty Clause, spends his holiday season doing good in the community as a “Clause for a cause.”

Refresh my memory. How long have you been Smitty Clause now?
I have been Smitty Clause since 2010.

How is 2019? What kind of events are you getting up to?

I am all over the board. I have done—oh, my goodness, let’s see bygolly—started off with doggy photos at Charlie’s Place, which is a grooming boarding place. I did six-and-a-half hours of pictures with 108 of my favorite canine friends—very crazy, yeah. And then I’ve been doing some house parties, office parties, business promotions. You name it.

Boy, after you take photos with that many dogs I bet the Santa suit needs laundering to get the pet hair out.

Oh, yes. Well, I use my backup suit, which is a nice suit, too. But I know it’s coming. I make sure that they’re both clean at the same time. And you can’t just send your Santa suit to any dry cleaner. I’ve had them come back pink before—pink fur. And that was when I only had one suit. Yeah, that was a panic situation.

I can just imagine that if I put my little dog in the lap of a big dude in a suit, he’d shake so hard he’d be just about bald when he got off you.

Yes. Oh, yeah—and not just the little dogs. Big, giant rottweilers are shaking like a tree sometimes. It just kinda freaks them out. Others, they just can’t get enough, much like kids.

What’s the event you were telling me you’re going to this afternoon.

There’s a home in Carson City ... for special needs folks—adults anywhere from 20 to, oh, 60 I guess. This will be my first year there. They love it. I’ve already read the letters to Santa. Santa is pretty much one of their most favorite people on the whole planet. They love Santa. And this is not open to the public. It’s just their time to cut loose. They bring in a little band, and they do a little buffet. And we’ll hand out presents. I put together some stockings with coloring books and crayons and some stuffed animals and a couple of other things. Yeah, this is going to be a party. I’m very excited about it.

Is there somewhere people can go to learn about upcoming events—or maybe you could tell me about them?

I’m trying to post on Facebook. My website got kind of hijacked. ... It’s



“Clause for a Cause.” ... A buddy of mine set it up years ago, and ... the group he went through took the domain. And they won’t give it back to me because my buddy can’t find the pin number. ... I have several people who have volunteered to set up another website for me, but I do have a Facebook Page—Clause for a Cause. And that’s Clause with the “e.” Yeah, it’s French. I’m kidding! ... But, this Saturday at Reno-Tahoe Audi there on South Virginia, I’ll be there from noon to 5 p.m. It’s a fundraiser for Casa [de Vida], but they told me to invite everybody on the planet. They want to share the love with everybody.

So what causes are you supporting these days?

My main benefactor is the Domestic Violence Resource Center. They have three different shelters for the moms and kids who are displaced. And they give me a list of wants, needs, colors and sizes—and I do my best to fulfill every single one of them. I’m about 95 percent there. The hard part is the shopping. Yeah, we’re talking 400 to 500 presents. And, you know, you get the favorite color and the size. It’s very tedious, but I enjoy it. It’s not a living Hell, or nothin’. It just takes a lot of time. You can generally see me at about 10 or 11 at night meandering through the store with my list all cross-eyed. But it’s fun. And then this is the first year I’ve taken care of these special needs adults in Carson. And then this Thursday, we’re doing a thing at the Kids Kottage, which is all of the kids in protective custody. This will be about our fifth or sixth year. I go there with a group of carolers that are headed up by Cami Thompson—and about half way through the caroling, Mr. and Mrs. Clause show up, and we bring stockings full of goodies and we chat

and sing Christmas carols and do a little dancin’. I’ve got a little song called “The Santa Boogie” that I teach them. It’s kind of a rip-off of “The Hokey Pokey.” But they’re too young to know what “The Hokey Pokey” is. Of course, you probably are too. But I’ll teach you “The Santa Boogie.”

OK. All right. How about for anyone in Reno who’d be inclined to be one of your little elves and helpers? How can people get involved?

You know, it takes almost \$2,000 dollars to keep this sucker running all year long. So monetary things are great. But I have a lot of home visits that I go to that they’re aware of what I do. And, you know, throughout the year they hustle friends. And warm clothes are always a big hit. You know, I do the photos with Santa and ask the kids what they want at different events. And, you know, it’s like iPhones and dirt bikes. But these kids want, like, gloves and hats and snow boots and stuff. So, yeah, warm clothing is a big, big, big thing. You really can’t go wrong anywhere from infants to 18-years-old, that’s always a big, big thing. Yeah, money and warm clothes are my big needs. I think it’s been our seventh or eighth annual—we do a big fundraiser at Vino 100. We do raffles and a silent auction, and this was our best one—this year. So I’m not as scrambling for money as I usually am this time of year. Usually I’m dipping into my own pocket, which doesn’t mean I won’t—because I go all the way to the end. On Christmas morning I like to go down to the shelter downtown and just hand out gift cards and cookies and what have you. I can’t seem to stop. □

Editor’s note: Columnist Bruce Van Dyke is off this week. He’ll be back soon enough.

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