

# Stop clowning around

## WIDESPREAD EVIL CLOWN SIGHTINGS REPORTED ACROSS THE COUNTRY

BY DOUG FRY

The phrase “clowning around” has a different feel in 2016. What was once a light-hearted term for jokes and giggles has turned into an epidemic that is sweeping the nation.

People are dressing up as clowns and harassing others by chasing, threatening or physically attacking. It started in South Carolina and has quickly spread. These pranks have gone past the point of a practical joke. Many people have started fighting back against the clowns, and it has caused unnecessary violence throughout the nation.

Meaghan Preston, a student at Clackamas Community College, had her own experience with these clown sightings. She described her recent encounter with a couple of local clowns.

“I left Pieology with a friend, we heard their clown horn and scurried off to my car,” Preston said. “We didn’t know we were being followed at first, but once we got to the light we saw that the clown was behind us. Once we entered the freeway they tailed us and got next to us, trying to run us off the road and other cars as well. We didn’t pay much attention. They then exited, and we followed to get their plates. They then ran a couple lights and stop signs, so we lost them. We called the police and filed a report.”

In this case, like many others, the clowns took their joke too far.

“I have a phobia of clowns so it truly wasn’t funny to me at all,” said Preston. “It’s one thing going to a haunted house and expecting and wanting to be scared. But this wasn’t my choice. I don’t think that’s fair.”

Even with what happened, Preston hasn’t completely given up on clowns.

“I definitely think it has given good clowns a bad name. I mean not all clowns are bad,” said Preston.

Professional Clown, Regina “Cha Cha” Wollrabe, a student at Clackamas, has been practicing her art for 27 years and is hoping that this hysteria will blow over. Wollrabe suggested that there is a difference between a clown and the imposters that put on a mask to scare others.

Safety has become an issue not only for people on the lookout for these imposters, but for real clowns too.

“It makes me sad, disappointed. I’m also experiencing fear myself,” said Wollrabe. “I was encouraged not to drive in my clown outfit as well when this hysteria came out. They didn’t feel we were necessarily safe because

people might do something. A lot of us are taking precautions right now and not driving in our costumes and makeup.”

People should not fear professional clowns since they follow a code of ethics and try to help people who do fear clowns, not create more fear.

“Some people I’ve met have been chased by a clown for some reason. That’s not what real clowns do. That’s not how we’re trained. That’s not ethical,” said Wollrabe. “Real clowns are trained to make a fool out of themselves, not out of the person that they’re entertaining.”

Wollrabe has been on a break for the month of October and hopes she can resume her profession when things calm down and become safer.

Tom Moore, the manager of Spirit Halloween, had another view to offer. Being on the business side of costumes makes the clown scenario a little different. Like many others, Moore has not paid much attention to the clown sightings and cares little whether someone dresses up as a clown or a turkey. To him, it’s just a choice people make.

“That’s what we’ve sold out first, all the clown stuff,” said Moore. “Except for him,” (pointing at a broken clown prop). “It’s all gone basically. It’s definitely helped sales and we probably won’t be getting any more clown paraphernalia.”

Being more observant this year can help keep people safe. Not all clowns are dangerous. Those who use clowning as an art want people to know that they shouldn’t fear all clowns. Any costume can be scary, but the holiday is all in good fun.

