

Crying inside? Creepy craze no joke for real clowns

By MICHAEL BALSAMO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Send in the frowns.

This year's nationwide creepy clown craze has become a nightmare before Halloween for actual, working clowns, who say their bookings at parties and other events have dropped sharply, even after many of the social media-fueled scary clown sightings have turned out to be hoaxes.

Some fear going out with their greasepaint makeup and red noses will make them a target of police or even marauding mobs who take to the streets on so-called clown hunts.

"It's definitely a scary feeling leaving your house, and you fear you are going to get jumped because you're dressed as a clown," says Cyrus Zavieh, a New York City hospital administrator who also performs professionally as Cido the Clown.

"You're there to make them happy, to make them have fun, and now they are saying, 'Aaaagghh!'" Zavieh says. "All of a sudden these stories are putting fear into kids. ... Before, they'd just look the other way, but now it's like, 'You're a scary clown and I hate you.'"

Scared performers

The World Clown Association — comprised of more than 2,000 members in 30 countries — has been flooded with calls from scared performers. It's been sending out safety tips, suggesting clowns consider changing into their costumes when they arrive at a party or go with a handler.

Association president Randy Christensen says clowns are also increasingly getting requests for "modified performances" in which they entertain without makeup and traditional clown attire.

This week, retail giant Target took the step of pulling scary clown masks from its shelves. And McDonald's says its signature clown character, Ronald McDonald, will be

'It's definitely a scary feeling leaving your house, and you fear you are going to get jumped because you're dressed as a clown.'

Cyrus Zavieh
a New York City hospital administrator who also performs professionally as Cido the Clown

keeping a lower profile.

The fallout follows a phenomenon in the U.S. involving dozens of stories, many fabricated, about clowns stalking or attacking people.

In multiple states, people have called police to report being menaced by people in clown costumes. In Kentucky, a man dressed as a clown was arrested after lurking in the woods. Children in Ohio and Texas have been charged with making clown-related threats to school classmates. A New York City teen told police a clown threatened him with a knife in the subway.

"They aren't clowns. They are clown impersonators," said Wendy Pincus, who has performed in New York City for the last 20 years. "We're here to make people happy. We don't threaten people. We bring joy."

Pincus, whose clown alter ego is "Crazy Daisy," says she's seen a 30 to 40 percent decrease in just the past few weeks.

Not new trend

Clown sightings, hoaxes and pranks — especially around Halloween — aren't new. In fact, they've become a



AP Photos/Mary Altaffer

Cyrus Zaveih, also known as Cido the Clown, poses for a photo. A spate of scares involving people doing menacing things while dressed in clown costumes has been no laughing matter for real clowns.

recurring staple of crime blotters since serial killer and working clown John Wayne Gacy was convicted in 1980 of killing 33 people.

In 2012, James Holmes dyed his hair red as Batman's Joker when he opened fire at a Colorado movie theater, killing 12 people.

Those high-profile cases notwithstanding, experts say it's relatively common for people to feel creeped out by clowns.

"It primarily has to do with the exaggerated makeup and features. We recognize it, but there is something abnormal," says Dr. Kristie Golden, associate director of operations for psychiatry and neurosciences at Stony Brook University Hospital. "We can be drawn in by that or we can be repelled."

World Clown Association's Christensen says this year's clown scares seem to be reaching new heights, and he suggests working clowns repel them the same way they always have, by spreading a message of happiness and boundless.



**DRINK COFFEE...
SUPPORT
STEVEN**

All proceeds from Coffee Girl will support Steven Wentworth's fight against cancer!

100 39TH STREET #2
ASTORIA, OREGON
503.325.6900
THECOFFEEGIRL.COM

Direct donations can be made through US Bank or online:

usbank **gofundme**
US Bank/Steven Wentworth www.gofundme.com/2k6hs77K



**ALL DAY!
OCTOBER
22 & 23**

*Art Sale Sponsored By:
Astoria High School*

**6-8PM
OCTOBER 23RD
AT COFFEE GIRL**

BEATS FOR LIFE!
Music Night Fundraiser to support **Steve Wentworth**
Victoria Holcom's Senior Project

Birds of a Feather
Aleesha Nedd
FOR LIFE BEATS FOR

Cancer Awareness
Helpful Tips on:
• Supporting cancer victims
• Supporting families
• Decreasing your chances of having cancer

Worried about taking the long way back?



Changes in your urinary tract system as you age can begin to affect your active lifestyle. If you're experiencing incontinence, pain or other uncomfortable symptoms, please make an appointment with urologist **Laura Gordon, M.D.**, at Providence Medical Group-Seaside.

Dr. Gordon provides surgical and non-surgical care for a variety of conditions, including common ailments such as incontinence, prostate problems and kidney stones.

Dr. Gordon welcomes new patients of all ages, including children.



Laura Gordon, M.D.
Urology

Schedule your appointment today.

Providence Medical Group-Seaside

725 S. Wahanna Road, Seaside, OR 97138 • 503-717-6523

We accept most major medical insurance.
For more information, visit Providence.org/pmg

