

SHINING A LIGHT ON A WCA STAR! INTRODUCING WCA JUNIOR JOEY SUPERSTAR

Miss Taylor Moss

— Elaine “Daisy D. Dots” Vercellone

Being the Junior Joey Director for W.C.A. was a dream come true for me. Having taught a Junior Clown school in my hometown and run a Junior Alley, I had seen firsthand the magic that can happen in sharing my clowning with them. When a youngster decides to join such a troupe as ours, they do so because they truly want to join. No one is making them do it, insisting on practice, giving quizzes, or setting deadlines. Because they want to become a clown, they are interested and seek the opportunities we present to learn more about this wonderful art. They practice because they want to get better. It's so different from so many clubs, groups and sports they may join during their school year that they might not be 100% invested in. To explain further, the atmosphere they are in with us is a comradery of individuals in their age bracket that all have the same desire to clown growing up today. This is huge! It means this will be fun. There will be some practice to it. But, it will be fun.

As Director with W.C.A., we try to keep in touch with our juniors and keep track of how they are doing and what they may be doing with their clowning. Thank you social media! As Director I am asked if our attendees go on and do something more with their clowning. I am happy to say that most times, they do something with their clowning after the Convention Program. The Junior Joey I will introduce you to in this article has done more. A LOT more! Val and I have been so lucky to have been able to keep in touch with this Junior and watch as she has grown as a person, a clown and a student since she attended our WCA Clown Convention in 2013. Her name is “Taylor Moss”.

Watching Taylor maneuver through a world that is not usually so eager to accept clowns with their unclear ideas of what clowns are is a skill. I've never witnessed this growth executed in such an admiral way. But, Taylor has. The way she has held herself to high standards all this time and not wavered in her love of clowning is truly exceptional. It's actually something that each of us desiring clowning can learn from.

It isn't just her clowning alone. She is a well-rounded person (thanks mom), doing really well in school and outside interests. It's just that clowning is weaved throughout everything she does.

The following are her answers to a questionnaire she was sent. We wanted to give our member readers a chance to know one of our extra special Juniors and show what can be done with their clowning.

I'd like to add to this that this terrific young lady has had the steadfast support of a steadfast mom. Even though they are not from a clown family, her mom, Brandy,

has provided the support necessary to help her daughter be grounded and pursue her dreams all at the same time. !

The following is the questionnaire sent to Taylor "Hoops" Moss. Sit back and enjoy the read.

Hi Taylor, please tell us how old you are now, what grade and where you go to school:

I am now 14 years old and attend Lebanon Middle School.

How did you hear about WCA and what made you decide to attend our WCA Convention that year?

My mom was looking online to see if she could find somewhere one of my favorite clowns was performing so she could surprise me with tickets. She ended up finding the World Clown Association through Google and saw that they were having a convention. Luckily for me, it was just a few hours away and my mom was willing to take me.

Did you have an immediate goal in mind and were you able to achieve it? (I remembered that you had wanted to win an award at the local Fair)

I had been working on circus skills for a couple of years (flying trapeze, lyra, silks, etc.), but no clowning. I had just started clowning through my local 4-H program, so I knew very little. My goal was to become a better clown. I not only achieved those goals, but I can honestly say that going to WCA that week changed my life. I went in as someone who loved everything about the circus and just wanted to be some small part of it. I came out after a week of learning and seeing how people reacted to my character and me as a person, truly believing that I could do so much more with my love of circus and my skills. I felt supported. People actively encouraged me to do more. I was encouraged to reach out to a talent agent, to try acting and different aspects of performing. So, I did. As soon as we got home, my mom contacted a local commercial talent agency, Talent Fusion. We met with them and they signed me. This has led to some fantastic opportunities and to me being signed with representation based out of Los Angeles (Jeffrey Loseff Management). Having that representation has led (and is still leading) to even bigger opportunities.

Because of WCA, I was able to learn new skills, perform, watch other performers (which is so important), network with people from around the world, and meet and make friends with so many talented clowns.

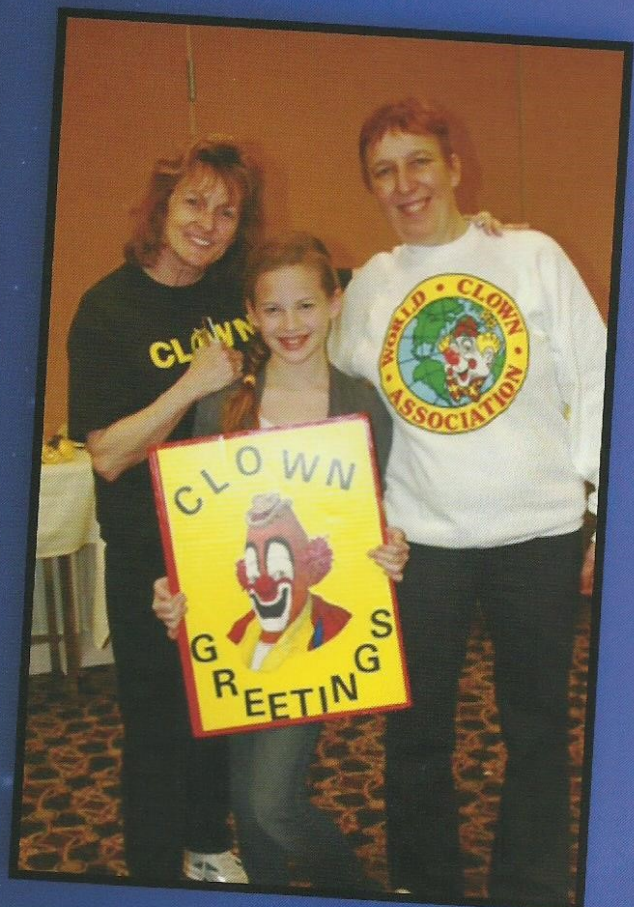
What was it about attending the Convention that became most important to you?

When I went in, I just wanted to become a better auguste clown. I was an auguste and I was going to stay an auguste! Through Elaine and Val, I ended up learning so much and left that week as a whiteface clown. This completely changed and majorly improved my clown character.

But, really, it is the people I met that have become the most important to me. The other junior joeys were amazing. We had so much fun and learned so much! I really feel like there is a bond between us still. We shared something special. The adults I met through WCA have continued to be a huge support to me with my clowning and my entertainment career in general.

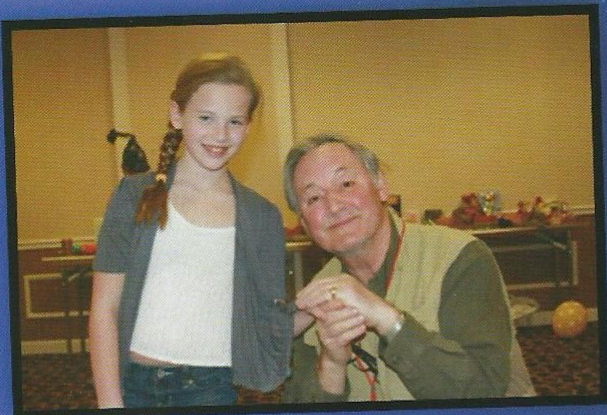
What were your favorite skills / skits you learned there?

Hands down, my favorite was "Dead or Alive" because I got to use some of my acrobatic skills. The huge bonus was getting to work with Arthur Pedlar. He was so amazing and nice and taught us all so much. He taught us how to properly fall from a clown pyramid and so much about the history of clowning. I loved all of it.



Was there anyone you met there that you felt inspired you to go further in your clowning?

Really, there are almost too many to mention! I can honestly say, without a doubt, I would not be where I am today without WCA. Attending the convention gave me a boost of confidence to try more. I met people who have been invaluable with helping my mom and I navigate the "showbiz" world. They are always willing to give advice, mentor, offer feedback, and introduce me to people. They have helped us ride the ups and downs of this craziness and help me learn to not take things personally. I don't always succeed with that yet, but they are there to remind me and keep urging me forward. I never had the opportunity to meet Lou Jacobs, but I have always heard stories about how generous he was with his knowledge and how important he felt it was to pass this knowledge on to the next generation. This is how I feel about my generous and awesome mentors.



Elaine and Val both gave me such confidence, while making me try new things. They were always patient and kind (and I fought pretty hard about trying whiteface and curly eyebrows!) They both still check in on me and are always so supportive. Elaine and Val both worked very hard to make sure the Junior Joey's felt like they were a part of the WCA. We could all feel how much they cared about us and the program.

Jim Caffrey is another person who I want to mention. He has helped in clowning, but he reached out as a person even more. Because of the way the Junior Joey program has traditionally been set up, we did not know anyone outside of our room. All the other JJ's were children of clowns and had known everyone for years or, at the very least, had their families at the convention. My mom and I just had ourselves. Of course we knew Elaine and Val, but during the banquet they would be sitting at a special table. We were sitting in the hall debating on whether or not to go because everyone basically had their "group" and we were not a part of any of these groups. Jim saw us and asked if we were coming in for dinner. I told him that we were going to skip it. He would not take this answer and made sure to bring us in and had us sit with his table. His kindness has always meant a lot to me and I am not sure that I ever even told him.

Others from WCA who have inspired or helped me have been Arthur Pedlar, Julie Varholdt, Deanna Hartmier, Kosuke Omune, countless others, and all the other Junior Joey's. I can't say that enough. It's not easy to love something that's not always so well accepted by others. Being able to meet other kids who have the same interests as you is so cool and life-changing. Also, there are not a lot of places for kids to just perform without competing. I think that is important. I don't think this should be a competition. Awards are good for the ego, but maybe not helpful for performance. We had the most fun and learned the most when we were working together.

What have you done with your clowning / entertaining since?

Almost immediately after the convention, I was signed with a local agency. I also began self-submitting for acting jobs. Soon after, I was cast as the lead in an independent film called "Cries Unheard".

Since then, I have starred in the award winning Mark Rosenau films "Vindicta", "Knock Knock", and "Tsirk". "Tsirk" was recently screened in London at the Twin Peaks UK Festival and I got to play a circus performer (aerialist on lyra). I have also completed several other films and have had some fantastic

auditions for major movies and shows. Networking through clowns also led me to sign with my manager in LA (a former Ringling clown), Jeffrey Loseff.

I have also been very fortunate with circus. I have had the opportunity to co-headline two shows with a veteran performer, where I got to do my own material. I have also had the chance to be in the circus ring in a huge arena in Missouri. I worked with Cirque Indy on their production of "Flight of the Living Dead", where I played the role of the lovable clown Sprinkles. I was also cast as the featured "Polichinelle" in the "Mother Ginger" scene for Butler Ballet's production of The Nutcracker. Dancing onstage at Clowes Memorial Hall was insane. Louisville's Turner's Circus invited me to be a featured performer in their show "Revue" as Hoops the Clown. It was such a dream come true.

What were your goals then and how do they compare with your goals today?

My life has changed since WCA, but my goal remains the same. I want to continue performing. I want to act. I want to be in the circus. I want to dance. I want to sing. That's not asking much, right? In working with director/cinematographer Mark Rosenau on films, I have really taken an interest in the behind-the-scenes aspect, too.

What things have you tried that you would not try again?

CURLY EYEBROWS (sorry, Val!) and WIGS. I like to clown as "au natural" as possible. Haha! I may never win a competition like that, but I am okay with that. This type of clowning allows me to be more "me" for my audience and connect with people. I think that is the most important.

We all learn that in order to grow, you have to be willing to try things you have never tried before along the way. It is that sense of achievement that brings us such joy it helps guide us to keep going. What have you done in your entertaining that has made you the most nervous or made you test yourself the most?

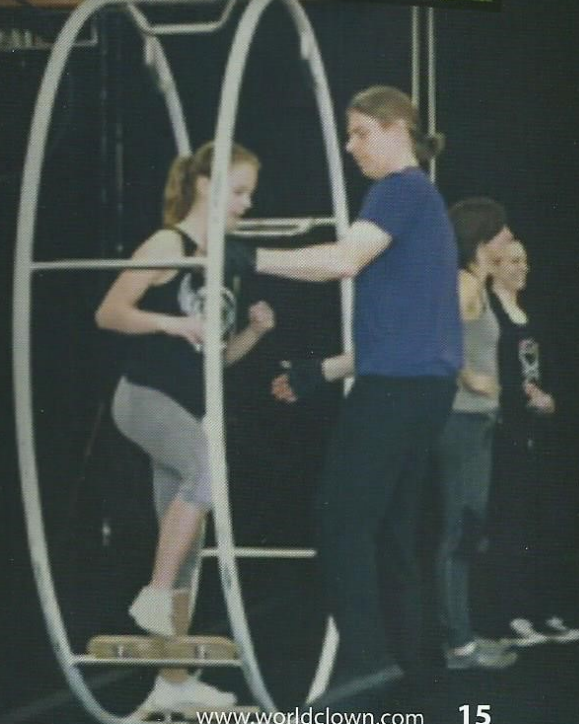
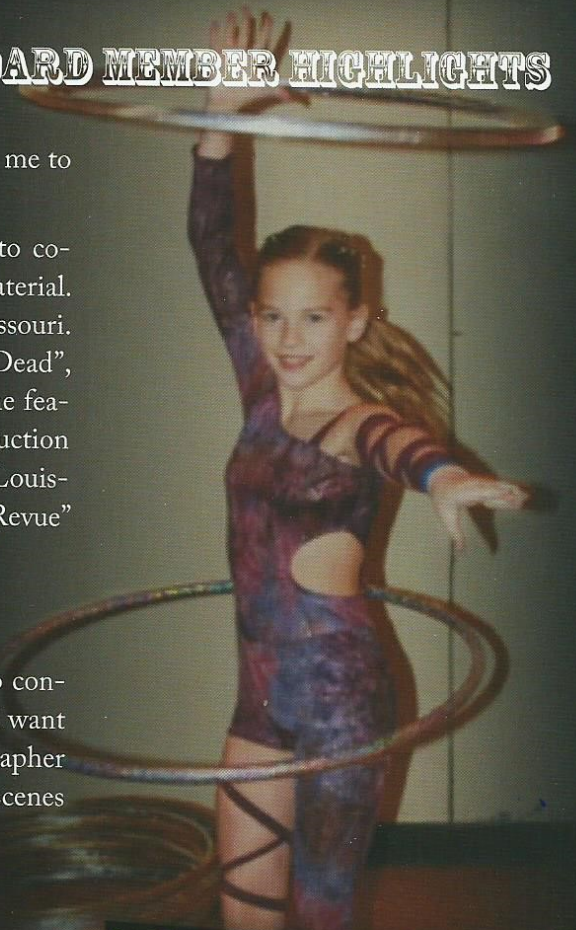
When I am in character, clown or acting, I am great. Not nervous at all. It is when I have to be myself and speak in public that I feel the most nervous and worried. I had to do live TV interviews for a recent film and I was a nervous wreck! I am always second guessing what I am going to say. This is definitely something I am working on.

What were the most difficult things you've done?

I would just say my schedule in general. I take dance, vocal, acting, and circus classes multiple times a week. I am also in advanced classes in school, perform regularly, and squeeze in as many auditions as I can get. It can be a little exhausting sometimes, but I wouldn't change anything.

Have you shared your clowning with your church, school or friends?

Yes, I clown as much as I can everywhere. I clown for my local 4-H program and we perform at local preschools and nursing homes. I also like to do what I call clowning for a cause. I have clowned for the United Way and their "Backpack Attack" program that gives school supplies to children in need. I have also been named a



Kohl's Cares regional scholarship winner for my "Clowning for Cancer" work with the Boone County Cancer Society. I clown, make balloon animals, or facepaint to raise extra money for them during their annual Battle of the BBQ and then donate the money to the cancer society.

I also advocate for the benefits of youth circus in general. I have done speeches at local events and the Indiana State Fair talking about the great things that can happen to kids when they are involved with circus.

With the help of your wonderful support team, Mom, what might you be hoping to achieve next?

Run away with the circus or star in a circus movie. Or maybe both at once. One day, one day...

What advice would you like to give to other Junior Joeys attending our program?

I would say, be YOU! You should listen and be open to advice. Try new things, of course. But, when it comes down to it, you know what is right for you. I would also tell them to be true to themselves with what they love. I always hear people say that I will "grow out of" being a clown. People were sure by the time I got to middle school, I would be done. Nope. Never let anyone stop you from your dreams.

My other advice would be to talk to people. Ask questions and reach out. I never thought in a hundred million years that I would get to talk with, work with, and learn from my clown hero. Networking is so important, in person and on social media. I booked the gig with Turner's Circus just by talking to them through Facebook and Instagram. I have also been contacted by talent managers and agents from LA because of my website and social media presence. My first manager in Los Angeles found me through Instagram. It is so important.

Do you think you may come to another WCA Convention in the future?

I really hope I can. Unfortunately, most of the time the conventions are not scheduled during a school break, which makes it hard for kids to attend.

I do want to say something else regarding the Junior Joey program. It is IMPORTANT. It is also important that it is not treated like a babysitting room. We work hard, our instructors work hard, and we have talent. Clowning, in general, has taken some hard hits the last few years. If we who love the art do not change how we approach it, it will be hit

even harder. You cannot have a "next generation" if you do not help raise that generation. It's true that we Junior Joey's need to be open to learning and changing, but so do the, um, "Senior" Joey's. We can all learn from one another.

The next convention is honoring "Historic Clowns". Who is more historic and iconic than Lou Jacobs? Honor Lou and his legacy by creating a new generation of clowns. Make the Junior Joey program a priority. Pass the torch.

"To be continued..." I wrote "to be continued" instead of "the end" because I know this story will be continued for quite some time. Make sure to read the next "Clowning Around" magazine when Taylor's mom, Brandy Moss, will let everyone know from a parental view, what has happened since the 2013 Convention!

From My Clown Heart to yours,
Elaine "Daisy D. Dots" Vercellone
WCA Junior Joey Director

Taylor and her Mom, Brandy; Taylor at school

