

[Loose Leaf Notes](#)

"A blog is to a writer what a canvas is to an artist." ~ Colleen Redman

[Clowns in Town](#)



The following was published in The Floyd Press on April 1, 2010.

“You need only three things for humanitarian clowning,” Ash Devine told a group of Young Actors Co-op (YAC) students, “a twinkle in your eye, a smile on your face, and a willingness to greet.”

Devine, a musician from Asheville, North Carolina, who grew up in the Blacksburg countryside was recently in town to teach a workshop on clowning, which she learned from Patch Adams, the medical doctor, social activist, and clown who was played by Robin Williams in the 1998 movie “Patch Adams.”



The 24 year-old Devine, who graduated from UNC Asheville with a degree in drama and community arts, first became familiar with Floyd when she was in high school and developed a following as a regular

performer when the Pine Tavern hosted a weekly open mic.

In 2008, Devine took a life-changing spring break to Haiti with Adams and others for humanitarian clowning. Clowning with Adams in orphanages and hospitals, Devine learned firsthand that humor is a universal language that transcends economic, cultural, and language barriers. She also learned that red



clown noses can be “an invitation to go anywhere.”

In preparation for clowning at Floyd’s Skyline Nursing Home, Devine spoke to the YAC students about the importance of intention over outcome. She advised them to be aware of the physical and cognitive limitations of others, stating, “We are here to love people and have fun.”

At the workshop, held in the Sun Hall, students were paired up in teams to practice exercises that explored improvisation, gesturing, and other and non-verbal expression. They learned that in the world of clowning everyday objects are used in new ways. A banana becomes a phone. A bunch of grapes might be used as a showerhead for mock bathing and later be worn as a hat. Instrument playing and singing were also part of



Devine’s clown instruction.

The morning after the workshop, the YAC group put their lessons in action. Dressed in fluorescent colored clothing accessorized with feathers and balloons, they spent two hours clowning around at the nursing home. After visiting with residents in their rooms in the Alzheimer’s Ward, they engaged others in lively game playing and sing-along songs in the community room.

YAC director Rose McCutchan said the students were impressed with the power of humor to bring joy and

happiness. Several of them commented on how different it was to use humor in challenging situations, she noted. About the YAC outreach, McCutchan said, “We’re here for the community. The community gives us so much that we want to give back. We’re lucky to have Ash to lead us.”




Devine hopes to be back in Floyd for some follow-up clowning sessions this summer. In the meantime, her schedule is full. Ready to head off to play a gig at Gillies in Blacksburg, she spoke of her plans to take humanitarian clowning on the road. She is currently working to raise money and to gather artists and resources for an extended Educational Clowning Tour in 2011 that will feature music, theater, dance, environmental awareness, and educational programs for youth. “It’s my dream to go on tour every year,” said the ukulele playing singer-songwriter clown. ~ Colleen Redman

Post Notes: Watch a video clip of the workshop [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Read about YAC’s last play [HERE](#). For more information about Ash’s music and humanitarian clowning visit her Myspace page at myspace.com/ashdevinemusic. Go to patchadams.org to learn more about humanitarian clown trips.

March 31st, 2010 colleen Posted in [Floyd Press Stories](#)

5 Responses | [Add your Own](#)

- 1  [Nessa:](#)
[March 31st, 2010 11:57 pm](#)

This is such a good project. So many people needs some humor and laughs in their lives.

- 2  [Kerri:](#)
[April 1st, 2010 9:09 am](#)


“We are here to love people and have fun”. You can’t go wrong with that kind of attitude!
My Mother was in a nursing/rehab center for 5 months last year and LOVED this kind of thing when she was there. Fabulous post Colleen!
And thank you SO MUCH for visiting my blog and commenting on the dragonfly wings! VERY VERY much appreciated!

- 3  [Catherine:](#)
[April 1st, 2010 10:24 am](#)

I was looking for the tree post you referred to on Carmi's blog, but wasn't sure which one you meant. I had a very pleasant visit with you, anyway.

- 4 [Loose Leaf Notes » Blog Archive » 13: Something Tells Me:](#)
[April 1st, 2010 10:49 am](#)

[...] a dull moment, working as a small town writer. In the last two weeks I did an interview and story on a humanitarian clown, a bluegrass singing librarian who was offered a record contract and an owner of a new shop in town [...]

- 5  [cna training:](#)
[April 8th, 2010 3:23 am](#)

nice post. thanks.

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From the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia I write to synthesize what I'm learning at the time, whether it be poetry, a political commentary, or a letter to my mother in Hull, Massachusetts, where I'm originally from. Whenever I don't know exactly what it is I'm doing and it borders on wasting my time, I call it research. 'Dear Abby, How can I get rid of freckles?' was my first published piece at the age of 11.

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March 2010

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