

# "Be a clown" is more than mere advice from this entertainer

A regular kid can turn into a different person within an hour, and Lebanon resident Steve Walden can show him how.

In fact, Walden, better known to children as Waldo the Clown, has been showing Boone County 4-H kids how to turn into clowns for two years.

Children who take the new Clowning course learn to talk, walk and act like a clown, and who better to teach the course than a real live clown.

Walden moved to the Lebanon area in 1984, and is a graduate of Lincoln Christian College and Clown Camp, the world's largest instructional program for non-circus clowns.

He is now a full-time clown and presents programs to schools, libraries, birthday parties and churches.

Walden was a minister for the youth in Colfax and transferred to the New Hope Christian Church in Whitestown, where he served as minister of youth and education until mid-1989.

It was while he was a youth minister that he began taking clowning classes. "It looked like it would be a good tool to make education fun and exciting and visual," he said.

He clowned on the side until mid-1989 when he decided to become a full-time clown.

But Waldo isn't an everyday clown.

"What sets me apart from many other entertainers is the high degree of structure and teaching that I use in every program. My

goal as Waldo is always to teach as well as entertain.

It's that educational emphasis to clowning that Walden shares with his 4-H children.

"I am not trying to turn them into entertainers," he said. My goal is to give them a strong educational base on clowning that will allow them to work one-on-one with others as their new clown creation."

And to work one-on-one, a clown has to feel comfortable about who he is. That's why Walden allows the children to choose the type of clown they want to be.

The list includes three:

- A whiteface clown is the smartest and the most clever, and always comes out ahead of the other two clown types.

- The Auguste is the prankster who is always trying to play jokes on the other clowns, but the jokes always seem to backfire.

- The Tramp is the slow-moving quiet clown who is sad-looking and used by everyone else.

"Only you can decide which of the three clown types is the right one for you," Walden advises the children. "It is a very serious and a very personal decision."

"Clowning is a growing process and all clowns go through many changes."

Walden instructs the 4-Hers how to apply makeup, a process that takes nearly an hour, he said.

The clown's makeup must be applied slowly and carefully. It is used to bring out and emphasize, not hide, the features of the face.

Walden also shows the children how to assemble the appropriate costume and how to act as a clown.

He shows the children how to work one-on-one with nursing home residents, children and crowds at festivals.

And he tells them about some of the things clowns should avoid including appearing in partial costume or makeup, or embarrassing anyone.

Walden also teaches the children how to mold balloon animals and perform juggling tricks.

Once the 4-Hers have mastered their clown, they are ready to visit the public.

The clowns visit nursing homes and daycare centers, and participate in several group activities. They are required to make three public appearances.

In addition, the clowns enter an exhibit at the 4-H Fair, which includes photographs of the child without clown makeup, with clown makeup, and in full clown attire.

The child must also submit a brief written biography of the clown, explaining the clown's character.

While the children are learning the art of clowning, Walden sits back and sees his everyday kids turn into new characters.

"To see someone excel in something you've taught them is great," he said.

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