

MADD Hatters call it quits

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The winter can be long and cold in Bear Lake, causing a deep restlessness in many homebound ladies. In 2001 this restlessness inspired Pauline Tolbert to call several of her friends and invite them to a "bored meeting." It was to be a Victorian Tea, so each lady was asked to dress in an extravagant hat along with gloves and a dress, this turned into a monthly occasion with alternating hosts. Several bored meetings had themes such as Western cookout, A Day in Russia, Pajama Party, and a murder mystery Dinner. They visited the Ream mansion in Dingle, Pickleville Playhouse, made several trips to Bear Lake and much more.

There was great chaos during one meeting when they were suddenly caught in a rainstorm during a luau. Some of the neighbors opened their garage doors and relaxed on lawn chairs enjoying the show of frenzied Hawaiian-clad women scurrying to get their party out of the rain.

And then, one day someone suggested that the ladies form a singing group, and just like that, the MADD (mothers against dreary days) Hatters was formed.

In December 2001, they were asked to sing at the annual Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Christmas party, they all agreed, thinking that it would be a one time performance.

The group got a few invitations to sing at church activities, various reunions, and more. Before they knew it they had developed a style of their own. They all purchased big, colorful hats and personalized them to fit their personality. They wore fancy dresses, gaudy jewelry, feathers, boas and anything else to get attention. Each one also created a stage name.

The group performed funny songs like, "Are You Bloated Tonight?" They told jokes and had a crazy hat show, where the ladies modeled hats decorated with everything from fruit to coffee cans and light bulbs.

The word got out about these amazing entertainers and more requests came in from three different states for performances at parties, corporate functions, senior centers, weddings and much more. These delightful ladies didn't charge for their act but have received gas money and large tips (especially the night a playful Hatter sat on a man's lap).

They performed monthly at the Skilled Nursing Facility and the Bear Lake Manor. The patients always looked forward to their coming, many would really get in the mood and sing along. Jack Crane claims that the MADD Hatters cured him when they danced into his hospital room one night after a performance at the nursing home.

In the spring of 2007, Soprano, Jocelyn Gooch

from the San Francisco Bay Area teamed up with the Hatters to perform in a sold-out concert at the Oregon Trail Center. The audience obviously wanted more, so the Trail Center hosted a sold-out Christmas concert where the MADD Hatters teamed up with several local artists. A portion of the proceeds from the concert were donated to the Senior Citizen Center in Montpelier.

The remarkable ladies aged from mid fifties to late eighties are proof that good friends can accomplish great things together. They have enriched the lives of the people they entertained, improved their skills as entertainers, forged enduring friendships, and tightened the knit of the Bear Lake community; they have been rewarded with the loving support and smiles of their audiences. The group has proven that the winters don't have to be a lonely and depressing time, but are a means for creating, befriending, serving and laughing, even when it's -20 degrees.

After memorizing 93 songs and performing 218 shows the MADD Hatters have laid down their performing hats though they still meet together for lunch once a month. While their shows will be greatly missed, their legacy of laughter, community and joy will always echo through the valleys of Bear Lake.