

The MADD Hatters of the Bear Lake Valley

The winters in Montpelier can be long and cold, causing a restlessness in some homebound ladies. So, one day in 2001 Pauline Tolbert decided to do something about it. She called several of her friends and invited them to a “bored meeting.” It was to be a Victorian Tea, so each lady was asked to dress in an appropriate hat, gloves, and dress. This continued as monthly get-togethers with alternating hosts. Several bored meetings had themes including a western cookout, a day in Russia, a pajama party, and a mystery dinner. Just imagine the chaos at one meeting when they were caught in a downpour during a luau! Some of the neighbors opened their garage door and relaxed in lawn chairs watching the scurrying Hawaiian-clad women trying to get their party out of the rain.

One day, someone suggested forming a singing group, and the MADD Hatters (Mothers Against Dreary Days) were organized. These charming ladies of a certain age started with a little talent and a lot of enthusiasm and with lots of practice have become wonderful singers and even better entertainers.

The group got a few invitations to sing at church groups, reunions, etc, and before they knew it had developed a style of their own. They all bought big, colorful hats and personalized them to fit their characters. Fancy dresses, gaudy jewelry, feathers, boas, and anything else to get attention were the order of the day. Each one added a stage name. Funny songs, such as “Are You Bloated Tonight?” were learned, jokes told, and a crazy hat show created. The ladies modeled these hats decorated with everything from fruit, to coffee cans and light bulbs.

The word was out, and more requests came in for performances at parties, corporate functions, senior centers, weddings, and much more. Before they knew it, the MADD Hatters had presented 120 performances in three states. These delightful ladies don’t charge for their act, but have received gas money and large tips (especially when a precocious Hatter sat on a man’s lap) from enthusiastic listeners. Once, after a show at a nursing home, they dropped in on hospital patient Jack Crane, and he claims they cured him.

In spring 2007 Bay Area Soprano Jocelyn Gooch teamed up with them to perform in a sold-out concert at the National Oregon California Trail Center in Montpelier. The audience obviously wanted more, so the Trail Center hosted a sold-out Christmas concert where the MADD Hatters teamed up with several local guest artists. A portion of the profits from this concert were donated to the Senior Citizen Center in Montpelier.

These remarkable people 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, and forged enduring friendships. Their reward has been the smiles of happy audiences.

THE MADD HATTERS AT THEIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT



Front row left to right:

Fabulous Fanny
Jolly Julie
Exciting Ellie
Nimble Fingers Nan (pianist)
Charming Clarissa
Darling Daisy

Verna Jensen
Jo Ann Farnsworth
Connie Hymas
Linda Walker
Genean Matthews
Maurine Austin

Back row left to right:

Energetic Eunice
Marvelous Masie (Master of Ceremonies)
Romantic Rose
Luscious Lilly
Rambunctious Rolanda
Naughty Nellie

Pauline Tolbert
Jolene Sparks
Virginia Jacobson
Ruth Thompson
Renee Bird
Gloria Cheirrett

Not shown, newest Madd Hatter:
Vivacious Venna

Marian Foss