

MAGIC IS MEDICINE: Sharing the Healing Power of Magic

By Donna Lurie

When Daniel Rosenthal was only nine years old, he performed for children with cancer at Kaiser Hospital in Santa Rosa, California. "I'd never seen so many sick, frightened children. Some were bald. Some didn't have eyebrows. I was shocked, but managed to hold it in," he recalls. "I remember doing shows in the Radiation Department and seeing sad parents. Some of their kids were on crutches. Others in wheelchairs. I did sponge balls and other interactive tricks to make each child feel special. It was great seeing magic bring happiness to the saddest people."

Since then, Daniel has performed for hundreds of children and adults who need a dose of magic in their lives. After one hospital show, a chemotherapy patient remarked, "This was the first time I've heard laughter here." On that day in 2007, Magic Is Medicine was born.



Daniel performing for a patient at Kaiser Hospital, Santa Rosa, California in 2007. This was the day he was inspired to start Magic Is Medicine.



Daniel was inspired by this photo of past S.A.M. President Harry Houdini (1917-1926) performing for children in a hospital.



Daniel with
PNP, Maria
Ibanez

And now it's expanding. Magic Is Medicine arranges for volunteer magicians to perform free shows in their communities' hospitals, hospices, homeless shelters, rehabilitation and assisted living centers, and schools for the handicapped.

"What a great idea, matching volunteer magicians with eager audiences, bringing smiles to the needy," says past S.A.M. National President Loren Lind, who is on Magic Is Medicine's new board of advisors. At age nine, Daniel joined the S.Y.M. in Pleasant Hill, California, where Loren and other magicians taught him. The next year, Assembly 112 invited Daniel to attend their meetings.

"S.Y.M. and S.A.M. are like a warm, welcoming family. These magicians transformed my life," says Daniel. "Now my dream is to inspire magicians all over to share their magic. What greater satisfaction is there than replacing frowns with smiles? What greater sound than laughter in a children's cancer ward?"

"Magic Is Medicine can create a ripple effect by getting more magicians to make the world a better place – from entertaining children in a chemotherapy clinic to disabled veterans or hospice patients," says Maria Ibanez, who also just joined the board of advisors. When Maria was national president of S.A.M., she described meeting Daniel, then a ten-year-old S.Y.M. member, in the September 2007 issue of *M-U-M*. "One of Daniel's goals is getting trained young magicians to join Magic Is Medicine. By working with the S.Y.M., we can inspire the next generation of magicians."

Kevin Spenser (International Magician of the Year, 2009) is on the board of advisors. Since 1984, his Healing of Magic organization has brought the therapeutic benefits of magic to more than 2,000 health care facilities in thirty-three countries (in coordination with his friend David Copperfield's Project Magic). "We welcome Magic Is Medicine's help recruiting magicians to teach simple therapeutic tricks to physically challenged patients and occupational and speech therapists," says Spenser. "Magic wands don't always belong with black hats and rabbits. Sometimes they belong in hospitals, where frail hands learn tricks and the magic is in the healing."

Magic Is Medicine also is partnering with another non-profit organization, Bread & Roses, which produces over six hundred shows each year at more than one hundred facilities in the San Francisco area, bringing hope and healing through live music and other types of performances. "We need more magicians to donate their talents," says program director Carolyn Gautier. "That's why Magic Is Medicine is a wonderful fit."

As Daniel puts it, "S.A.M. members, your volunteer magic can make worries disappear and laughter appear – and your audiences don't even have to leave their hospital beds or wheelchairs."

For more information, visit: www.MagicIsMedicine.org ☆