

Each month, our **Featured Member** section profiles a ClausNet member. Members are chosen totally at random by me and the staff. Once selected as Featured Member of the Month, we interview the candidate and post the interview here. This is a wonderful way to get to know your fellow ClausNet members!

We are happy to announce our **ClausNet Featured Member for October 2019** is **Black Hills Santa!**

Black Hills Santa

Featured ClausNet Member – October 2019



Profile: [Black Hills Santa](#)

Real Name: Jason

Location: Rapid City, South Dakota USA

ClausNet member since: December 12, 2018

Community Reputation (as of today): 683 – Fabulous!

Website: BlackHillsSanta.com

Our October 2019 Featured Member of the Month has been putting on the red suit for almost 30 years. Black Hills Santa, aka Santa Jason, joined ClausNet in 2018. Since then he has been a regular

contributor to the community. What I love most about doing these interviews is learning how much so many of us have in common. We caught up with Jason a few days ago, and here is what he had to say...

ClausNet: How long have you been portraying Santa Claus and how did you get started?

Jason: *"I suppose you could say I have portrayed Santa for 29 years. The first time I was a sixteen-year-old boy who donned the outfit for a friend's daughter. My friend was deployed in the first Gulf War and his little girl was 3 years old. But I have actively portrayed Santa for the last 21 years except for a couple of Christmases when I was in Iraq."*



ClausNet: What or who are your influences on your portrayal of Santa Claus?

Jason: *"I take a little bit from everyone that has donned the red suit and incorporate that into my portrayal. No two children are the same and no two venues are the same. And, I believe that having a large repertoire, composed of many different elements from different sources, enables me to better meet the individual venue and the individual child's needs."*

ClausNet: What do you enjoy most about being Santa?

Jason: "To me the best part is that I can give hope, love, comfort, care where it is needed and when it is needed. So many children come from broken homes or troubled homes, or they're bullied at school and they have nobody to turn to. Nobody, that is, except Santa Claus. Santa Claus understands children. He's there to help make things better. He cannot make it perfect, but he can make it better. I was a bullied child and I knew that Santa Claus loved me no matter what. He did not pick on me. He was there every year and he loved me and believed in me. That is something I wholeheartedly try to provide to children: that I am there for them. That I believe in them."

ClausNet: What is your most memorable visit?

Jason: "I would say that the most memorable event is probably the first one I did for one of my children. My daughter was 10 months old but I sweated and worried over everything. I wanted it perfect because this was her first visit with Santa Claus and it was her dad. Yet, to be honest, I try to soak up every visit and remember a little something from each one. They all have a special place within my heart."

ClausNet: Do you have a favorite gig?

Jason: "No, I do not. I find that every time I wear the red suit it is my favorite time because I have that red suit on. Just the chance, the opportunity to bring love enjoy to a child is a blessing!"

ClausNet: What is your dream gig?

Jason: "Oh, I suppose it would be to be in a parade. But, I don't do this for self-glory, rather, I do it for the children. So if it is the will of God for me to do something bigger then it will come along in due time."



ClausNet: What keeps you busy when you are not being Santa?

Jason: "I work for the Veterans Administration as an HR specialist. I solely work for and with disabled veterans who are trying to get back out into the workforce. I also volunteer with my local fire department as a firefighter and for the last 7 years I have been a volunteer and a mentor with the Girl Scouts. I spend a lot of time with my family, or as much as I can. I missed about 3 years of my children's lives when I was in the Army and somewhere in my mind I keep trying to make up for that time."

ClausNet: What are your hobbies / interests?

Jason: "When it's baseball season I live and breathe Chicago Cubs. When it's hockey season I live and breathe the Minnesota Wild. I usually have a vegetable garden and I enjoy all of the flowers that I tend to in our yard. I thoroughly enjoy reading and on average I read about 50 books a year. I love American history, I devote a lot of time to religious studies, and I enjoy taking on special projects for the Girl Scouts and my fire department. Of course, I spend quite a bit of time studying the history of Christmas, its meanings both secular and religious, and doing small things to help hone my craft. I also on a daily basis practice my ASL for I have a nephew who is deaf. And, we do have a deaf school in our area so it is important for me to be fluent in ASL during the Christmas season."



ClausNet: What is your favorite color?

Jason: "Blue."

ClausNet: What is your favorite food?

Jason: "Breakfast is my absolute favorite food. I spent a year deployed with British troops and they taught me about the full English breakfast. I absolutely love it: sausages, Heinz beans, toast, fried tomatoes, mushrooms, and eggs. It's a lot to cram in but boy do I love it! Beyond that, I do enjoy German foods and good old Americana: hamburgers and hotdogs!"

ClausNet: Coke or Pepsi?

Jason: "Coke."

ClausNet: What is your favorite cookie?

Jason: "Chocolate Chip."

ClausNet: What is your favorite movie?

Jason: "The Outlaw Josey Wales."

ClausNet: Do you have a favorite Christmas movie?

Jason: *"This is a tough question. I would say it is It's a Wonderful Life. I watched it as a child with my mother and I loved it then and every year of our marriage I have watched it with my wife."*

ClausNet: What is your favorite Christmas song?

Jason: *"O Holy Night."*

ClausNet: What was the last book that you read?

Jason: *"Islands in the Stream by Ernest Hemingway. I just finished it and am now pouring through a collection of 50 short stories starring Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot."*

ClausNet: What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

Jason: *"Police Officer."*

ClausNet: What profession would you not like to attempt?

Jason: *"Doctor. I can be a hypochondriac, so I would drive myself nuts."*

ClausNet: What were some of your favorite toys as a child?

Jason: *"Baseball bats, baseball gloves, baseball's, roller skates, and little green army men."*

ClausNet: What is your most memorable experience of Santa while growing up?

Jason: *"My uncle had a cheap flannel suit and every year out of the love of his heart he would show up at our door and surprise me and my two younger brothers. My uncle was six foot-four, so it was not too hard to figure out it was him. But looking back, wow! He enjoyed it so much and you know what? We three boys did also."*

ClausNet: What is the hardest question you have gotten as Santa Claus and what was your response?

Jason: *"Last year a five-year-old asked me if I could bring her sister home from jail. It was gut-wrenching because no child should have to ask something like that. But I had been asked this question before and was able to provide a good answer to the child. When that little girl asked me that question last year, I knew that this is something God approves of me doing: being Santa Claus for children. Not everyone can answer a child like that. It takes something special to be able to do that. That little girl refused to get off of my lap or to let go of me. Why? Because for a brief moment in her life her pain, worry, and fear was erased. How blessed am I to be able to do this for God's little ones."*

ClausNet: What is the strangest request you have gotten as Santa Claus?

Jason: *"I had a six-year-old ask me for an antique Chinese tea set. My only response was that I I knew she would have a good Christmas. I have no idea where I could ever get such a thing and how much it would cost!"*

ClausNet: How did you find ClausNet?

Jason: *"I stumbled upon ClausNet while searching for Santa organizations. I had no idea in a million that there was such a thing as ClausNet."*

ClausNet: And what do you like most about ClausNet?

Jason: *"Getting ideas from other people is a tremendous asset. Also, being able to share a few ideas with others is fabulous. A lot of times we get tunnel vision when we're looking at a project or a problem. To be able to assist someone with a suggestion to help them is a rewarding experience!"*

ClausNet: Is there a Santa or Mrs. Claus over the years that you admire or has inspired you? Can you tell us a little bit about him/her?

Jason: *"I would say every Santa Claus I have seen in a movie or I have interacted with in person has inspired me in one way, shape, or form. For instance, when I was in Iraq on my second tour of duty, I met a British Father Christmas. How fabulous to see how he interacted with people? How his dress and mannerisms were. Also, when I was stationed at Fort Drum, New York, I lived just a few miles from Canada. I was able to have a front row seat of how Santa Claus in Canada compares with Santa in the States. And, having lived so close to French Canada, Pere Noel became a part of my Santa persona. All of this has influenced me and helped make me the Santa Claus I am."*

ClausNet: What advice can you give to a first time Santa or Mrs. Claus?

Jason: *"Well, I still get nervous every time. That nervousness is because I want to do my best. So to someone being Santa and Mrs. Claus for the first time, I say relax. Just be yourself. Remember what it was like to be a child and look forward to seeing the greatest human being you'll probably ever meet. Don't ho ho ho too loud or too often. Let the children talk to you. Do not hear them, listen to them. You may not have all the answers. No one ever does. Children are looking for hope, so answer as well as you can, and all will be well. And definitely, if you are a religious person, pray for guidance and blessings and I am sure that He will answer your prayer. Do what's best for you and the child!"*

ClausNet: Anything else you would like to add?

Jason: *"This is a wonderful honor for me and I am so appreciative. This last year, being a member of ClausNet and engaging with so many wonderful people has really been a blessing and has been so educational. I could not be a more happy or blessed man!"*

Thank you Jason! **And THANK YOU for your service!** Everyone, please join me in congratulating **Black Hills Santa**, our ClausNet Featured Member of the Month for October 2019!

