

# The Annual COAI Competition Awards

## Convention Best in Clown 2017



## Matthew Spraggins

Competition Photos by Marilyn Barrett  
Layout & Design by Bryan Conroy, Regina  
"Cha Cha" Wollrabe, and Teo Wollrabe

President Mike Cox presented Matthew Spraggins with the 2017 Convention Best in Clown Award for earning the highest combined score in this year's competitions.

Matthew lives and operates his children's entertainment business in Rockwall, Texas. He shared a little with us about his experience and how he became a clown.

I had been drawing caricatures for a few years, working weekend events. I saw other entertainers twisting balloons and performing as clowns and characters. It looked like more fun than what I was doing, and I noticed they were getting more jobs. So I started looking into it. Soon after, I got the chance to draw a coloring book for the Shrine Clowns in the Dallas area. They invited me to come to their circus, and I loved it. I was still learning to twist balloons, and I found a few balloon jams. There, I met some clowns who invited me to an alley meeting.

Awards were presented in fourteen categories during the 32nd Annual COAI Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Recipients were recognized at the banquet on Saturday, April 30, held at the Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel.

Although awards are offered for the top ten contestants in each category, scoring does not always result in awards for all ten positions. In categories with five or fewer competitors, placement is based on percentile achievements. Contestants may also tie for placement.

*"I've been clowning for four years this August. This was my second COAI Convention."*



Now, I have been called weird, annoying, and immature for most of my adult life, but when I walked into that first meeting and heard how immature, annoying, and weird those people were, I froze. These people were just like me! I had never felt more comfortable around a group of people in all of my life, and I didn't really know anyone there. I knew this was a gift from God. I thought, "These are my people!"

I looked for classes but couldn't find any because they were no longer offered in my area. I taught myself mostly through back issues of *The New Calliope* and YouTube.

I quit my day job and started entertaining full time, presenting myself as a clown. I had terrible shoes, terrible makeup, and a terrible costume.

After other horrible attempts to select a name, I settled on "Stompers." My first clown job was also my first face painting job. It was scary, but I learned tons. Soon afterward, I completely revamped my look, changed my name to "Soda-Pop McBop," and got a menu for my face painting jobs.

I've been clowning for four years this August. This was my second COAI Convention. I also attended Las Vegas last year. Competing has been the best part of the conventions for me. I learn how to take constructive criticism and apply all the skills I've learned



from classes. Then I take what I've learned in competitions and put that knowledge into my business.

Making others smile is the best job I have ever had. It is a true gift from God! **TNC**