

Red Hatters are most recognized by their red hats and purple attire



Queen Connie Frazier of the Red Hat Roadrunners

# CyFair Area *Red Hatters*

**These 'Over 50' Ladies Know How to Embrace Friendship, Laughter, and Fun**

If you've come across a group of mature women dressed up in bright red hats and purple clothes, you've encountered some of the proud members of the Red Hat Society. Eight of the 24,000 Red Hat chapters worldwide are based in the Cy-Fair area.



Red Hatters on a recent outing



The Red Hat Roadrunners of Cy-Fair board a bus for their 'Bling it On' field trip

*Written by Laurie Roddy    Select photos by Marisa Hugonnett*

The Red Hat Society unofficially began in 1997 when artist Sue Ellen Cooper gave a friend a red fedora and a copy of the Jenny Joseph poem *Warning* about growing older. The opening, ‘When I am an old woman I shall wear purple and a red hat that doesn’t go and doesn’t suit me’ struck a chord with many women. After being featured in *Romantic Homes* magazine in 2000, the society took off and is now one of the largest women’s social groups in the world.

### Cy-Fair Ladies and Queens

As chapters are started, the founding members decide on a name for the chapter and names for each of the members. Anna Marie Linkhart, who is the founder of the Merry Maids, is the Queen of Chatter (all chapters are led by queens). Members in her chapter include Lady Watchadoller Whimiscat (Barb Rick), Princess Falala (Sue Master), Princess Artista (Sue Edwards), Lady Sunshine (Dot Boyett), and Princess Pooh Pat (Pat Lawrence). All the names are based on the member’s personality, hobbies, or likes. I’m not so sure about Princess Pooh Pat. Say the name fast and see how it changes meaning.

### Supporting Each Other

Laughter and friendship are definitely the cornerstones to a Red Hat group and the Vibrant Valentines are no exception. Started by Diana Heffern after years of raising children and caring for ailing family members, the Valentines meet regularly to wine, dine, and shine. “I am a member of 20 chapters and I love it,” laughs Heffern. “The point of the chapters is to have a place to come and have a good time. We support each other through illness and life’s troubles.”

Besides wearing their trademark outfits, the common thread of the Red Hatters is that they are a network for support, friendship, and fun. “You’ve done and done all your life and now it’s time for fun and good times,” adds Lady Watchadollar Whimiscat (Barb Rick).

### Red Hat Sightings

“The first time I went out in public in the red hat, I was so embarrassed,” admits Sue Edwards. “After a few times it just becomes so freeing and you don’t care anymore. When we go out we get the most attention from guys. They want to take pictures with us,” adds Linkhart as she and the entire group breaks out in laughter. “We went to a pajama breakfast with Elvis dressed in purple pajamas, fuzzy slippers, and red stocking hats and went shopping afterwards,” beams Rick.

Monthly activities of the groups range from dinner theaters, museum tours, bunko nights, margarita parties, road trips to small Texas towns, movies, and eating out (all dressed to the nines in red, purple, and plenty of bling)."

### A Special Sisterhood

“Most of our events center around eating, shopping, and entertaining,” says Heffern of her Vibrant Valentines. “It’s like a sorority where we get together and talk about things we have in common. I try to do this from morning until I pass out at night. I might have three things at once but I pack a lunch and a cooler and head out the door. I love it.” Laughter with Red Hatters is definitely not in short supply. Each one has funny stories to tell whether it’s going to the national convention and seeing that their group isn’t even close to being the most “out there” dressed chapter or attending Menopause Musicals with hundreds of other Red Hatters

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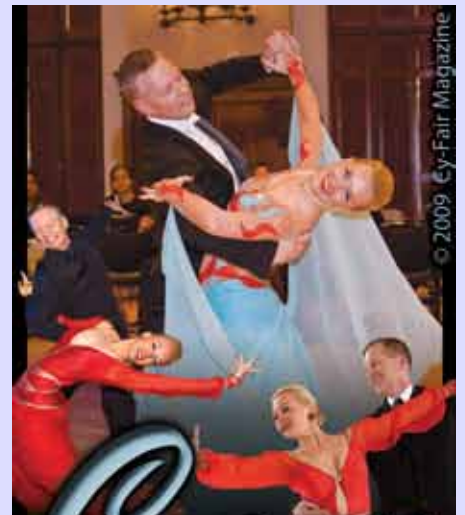
Two of the Vibrant Valentines at a recent movie night event



Anna Marie Linkhart (bottom right) and her Merry Maids of Mirth and Madness



Merry Maids of Mirth and Madness at a recent ice cream outing



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Merry Maids of Mirth and Madness gather for a field trip



Queen Connie Frazier and Patricia Ali



Red hats on display at a Merry Maids of Mirth and Madness event



and Pink Hatters (women who have not reached the required age of 50).

Regardless of where you live or what your schedule, there is a Red Hat group just waiting to say, "Let's go. It's your time to have fun now." CFM

LAURIE RODDY has been a writer for over 25 years and authored the book, *60 Hikes Within 60 Miles: Houston*.

## Red Hat Factoids

The Red Hat Society is frequently mentioned in cartoons, TV shows, and movies.

- The Simpsons episode The Last of the Red Hat Mamas
- Comic strip Pickles
- Still Standing TV show
- Corner Girl – a Canadian sitcom
- Comic strip Mother Goose and Grimm
- Cartoon Chowder episode The Big Hat Bitties



“The point of the chapters is to have a place to come and have a good time.”

- Diana Heffern



## Cy-Fair Area Chapters

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