

● happy

Grin Reaper

Oppressed by the depressed,
the Secret Society of Happy
People keeps on smiling



"Our message is, 'Don't rain on our parade,'" says society founder Pam Johnson (left), with fellow cheerperson Melissa Hammer.

And how did you celebrate Aug. 8 this year? You didn't? You ignored Admit You're Happy Day, proclaimed by 16 governors? Well, that's . . . sad.

Not that it bothers happiness militant Pam Johnson, head of the 800-member Secret Society of Happy People, who lobbied all those governors to recognize her big day. "There's a group for every wound you have," says Johnson, "but no group because you're happy. We're advocates for the right to express happiness." That means talking about life's joys—loudly proclaiming them, in fact—even at work, where

happy people, she says, are viewed as maladjusted. "The Dilbert Principle went into effect, and it became chic to complain," complains Johnson. "If you say, 'I really like my job or boss,' it's not considered cool."

Last November, when Ann Landers chided people who mail out cheery newsletters at holiday time, Johnson and her group went public with their displeasure. "You have a right to be happy and to share that with others," says Johnson, who is happily single.

Johnson, 33, a regional sales rep for the Hazelden Foundation, became a happy warrior in 1997 when

she was running a women's workshop and wanted to empower people to be happy. She insists her group is not about self-help. "We don't tell you how to do it," she says. But they do have a newsletter, T-shirts, bumper stickers and a Web site that asks, "When did being happy become politically incorrect?"

Naturally there are naysayers. "You happy people just need to keep your happiness to yourself," one grouchy dissenter wrote her. Johnson was unfazed. "If they're happy being miserable," she says, "we're happy for them."

There. Happy? ●