

Wisconsin Historical Society: Wisconsin's national circus treasure turns 60!

Posted on Thursday, Mar 22, 2018

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Baraboo, Wis. – Circus World Museum is getting ready to celebrate its biggest year yet with extraordinary performers and world-class animal acts all wrapped into a 1950's-inspired theme, celebrating the decade that the site was founded and opened.

“We are excited to begin our 60th year as a dynamic living history museum, continuing to educate and entertain our guests, from all over the state and country who share our love of the circus through great performances and programs all summer long,” said Scott O’Donnell, site director of Circus World Museum. “Adding to the celebration will be the completed restoration of a historic circus wagon from 1882, the cataloging and digitization of priceless circus collections, and continuing to tell the enduring circus stories of our great state and nation. Circus World truly is Wisconsin’s National Treasure!”

In 2018, the Big Top will feature a rockin’ 1950s soundtrack featuring hits by Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Brenda Lee, and other legends. Guests will once again see the Circus World elephants, and be introduced to the entrancing grace of Colleen Pages, a multigenerational circus aerialist. The Big Top will also showcase Hans Klose and his 19 delightful dogs and two 700-pound pigs, Vladimir and Olga Smirnov’s Magical Quick Change act that unifies color, dance, music and illusion with mystifying miracles materializing right before your eyes. Clowns Steve Copeland and Ryan Combs will entertain with their zany antics, and one-wheeled wonder Wesley Williams will put guests on the edge of their seats by riding a 25-foot unicycle.

Rounding out the many daily offerings will be Shake, Rattle & Roll – a novelty instruments show, Nothing But Nonsense – a comedy/variety extravaganza, Kid's World Circus where kids create a circus performance of their very own, a guided tour of the world's largest collection of authentic circus wagons and vehicles, plus Ryan Holder's Tiger Adventures with Bengal and Siberian Tigers in an educational and entertaining program demonstrating the love he has for these animals.

As Circus World Museum continues the smooth transition of moving operations to the Wisconsin Historical Society, it will persist in its mission to collect, preserve and share stories of Wisconsin's vibrant circus history.

"Growing up, my family and I visited the Dells and Baraboo every summer and Circus World Museum was a big part of our family tradition," said Christian Overland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director of the Wisconsin Historical Society. "Today, Circus World still is a huge part of our state's story and unique in the country. Thanks to the efforts of Governor Walker and the support of the State Legislature, The Wisconsin Historical Society and our local partners are able to continue to share the experience for many generations to come."

Part of the mission of Circus World Museum is to educate and facilitate research pertaining to the circus arts. Each year Circus World's Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center answers over 2,000 requests from educational institutions, businesses, governmental agencies, and individuals from across the globe. The site also manages and preserves a large collection of rare photographs, posters, manuscripts and artifacts.

Circus World Museum is a living history museum committed to the preservation of the animal species that join the site each year, the enrichment of their lives, the best of care and sharing their beauty and grandeur with children of all ages. During the annual 16 weeks that animals are with Circus World onsite, they receive 24-hour care, an abundance of fresh food, clean water, veterinary care, and many associated enrichment activities and elements. They also receive full inspections by local, state and federal officials.

"We want guests to leave Circus World Museum with an up close, personal appreciation for the circus and for history," continued O'Donnell. "We are committed to providing an enriching environment for elephants, tigers and all animals that join us each summer. This coupled with a forum that allows visitors to see, learn and appreciate these important species is equally part of our mission. It is

our hope that these experiences will lead future generations along a compassionate path of greater understanding and a commitment to the survival of these species.”

Circus World Museum’s spring season began on March 20, with the summer performance season running from May 18 through Sept. 2, and the fall season continuing to October 31.

For more information on Circus World Museum visit, www.circusworldbaraboo.org.