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Circus World Announces Plans to Honor Elephants Ahead of Their Retirement

Elephants Will Retire After the Summer of 2023

Baraboo, Wis. – The beloved elephants at Circus World are set to retire next year, but not before a season-long celebration honoring the biggest stars of the big top. Elephants have been esteemed members of the Baraboo community since 1888, when the Ringling Bros. Circus featured its first elephants, Babe and Fannie.

“We want to host a retirement celebration befitting the biggest stars of the circus,” said Scott O’Donnell, Circus World site director. “Plans are underway to pay tribute to their legacy throughout the summer and long into the future.”

Circus World will commemorate the elephants’ careers with the debut of new exhibits dedicated to their legacy throughout circus history. These exhibits will be housed in the Feld Visitor Center and Exhibition Hall as well as in the National Historic Landmark 1897 Elephant House. During the summer season, there will be a daily presentation called “Trunk Tails” hosted by ninth-generation circus performer Armando Loyal. He will provide an inside look at elephant species, conservation efforts and daily care routines. In addition, the elephant act in each western-themed big top show will conclude with a heartfelt rendition of “Happy Trails!”

The Baraboo community will also commemorate its favorite summertime residents in the 2023 Big Top Parade, by inviting the elephants to be their special Grand Marshals on Saturday, June 24.

“It’s a fitting tribute from a community that has embraced and celebrated elephants for more than a century,” said O’Donnell. “We hope that children of all ages will visit during the summer ahead and spend time with these cherished ladies before they head off to retirement.”

The elephants’ retirement is the culmination of a five-year plan created in conjunction with their care team, leading veterinary experts specializing in elephant species, and Wisconsin Historical Society leadership. The elephants will retire to the Endangered Ark Foundation in Hugo, Oklahoma, where they will live with the rest of their herd on 200 acres of grass in enriching natural environments.

“Animals will continue to be a vital part of the Circus World experience, and we are excited to once again tell the story of some of the earliest circus acts when we bring back our equine program in 2024,” said O’Donnell. “Our focus will continue to emphasize a positive and respectful relationship between humans and animals.”

For more information and to learn more about Circus World, visit circusworldbaraboo.org.

About Circus World

The circus arrived in America from England in 1792 and was immediately embraced by George Washington and the general population. From the early 1870s through the late 1920s, the circus reigned supreme as the most popular form of entertainment in the country. Circus World is located at the site of the Ringling Bros. Circus Winter Quarters in Baraboo, Wisconsin. At its founding in 1959, the site was comprised of less than an acre of land and a collection of six circus wagons, but has grown into an internationally recognized and respected institution encompassing 64 acres, 30 permanent structures, and 260 historic circus wagons. For more information, visit circusworldbaraboo.org.

About Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.

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