

Curtain Opens on a New Act for Circus Smirkus

Greensboro, VT – July 11

Circus Smirkus, Vermont's favorite youth circus, is moving forward with its plans to build a permanent home for its summer camp in Greensboro, VT. In April the purchase of 135-year-old farmhouse and barn on 35 acres was completed, and on July 1, construction on the new camp began. A groundbreaking ceremony is planned for 11AM on July 15th.

The circus plans to remodel the existing facilities and construct new dormitories to allow its summer camp to bring over 600 campers to the Northeast Kingdom each summer to learn the art of taking a pie in the face.

The new Smirkus summer camp will add to the vitality of Greensboro, VT, the town it has called home for 27 years. Smirkus predicts an economic impact of a quarter million tourism dollars annually on the local area and an addition of fourteen permanent and seasonal jobs. Local entrepreneur Mateo Kehler of the Cellars at Jasper Hill expressed his excitement for the project. "The town of Greensboro is enthusiastically behind this project. It builds on the successes of Northeast Kingdom companies like Hill Farmstead, Pete's Greens, High Mowing Seeds, Craftsbury Outdoor Center, and Vermont Soy."

The company is thrilled to be bringing Smirkus Camp back to Greensboro—just eight miles from its world headquarters and the well-known Big Top Tour and aims to open the new facilities in the summer of 2015, just in time for the camp's 25th Anniversary. In addition to providing Smirkus control over our summer schedule, and a new a custom designed Smirkified camp, the new camp enables Smirkus to add 200 campers per summer. Moreover, the new camp doubles our capacity for scholarship funds allowing Smirkus to reach underserved kids from the Northeast Kingdom and Vermont.

"There are so many reasons to be excited about our new home for Smirkus Camp," remarked Ed LeClair, Executive Director of Circus Smirkus. "We hate to turn away children with circus stars in their eyes, but our previous facilities just couldn't hold all the kids who want to run away to Smirkus. Now we have room to add as many as 200 campers every summer. Plus our new facility will bring jobs and tourism to the area and will double the capacity for scholarships, allowing Smirkus to reach more kids from the Northeast Kingdom. This is our dream come true."

Circus Smirkus is an award-winning, international youth circus. Founded in Greensboro, Vermont, in 1987 with the mission of promoting the skills, culture, and traditions of the traveling circus and providing a forum for kids to engage in life-enhancing adventures through the circus arts, Smirkus has grown to include three programs: **Big Top Tour**, the only touring youth circus in the country, the acclaimed in-school and after-school **Ringmaster Residencies**, and **Smirkus Camp**, America's only residential summer camp that teaches the circus arts in traditional European big top circus tents.

Smirkus Camp was founded in 1990 so that kids of all ages and abilities could experience the dream of running away and joining the circus.

The new property overlooks Lake Caspian and provides views of nearby Stannard Mountain. The existing farmhouse will be home to camp administration, and the antique post and beam barn will become a dining hall and gathering area for camp activities. The new dormitories will be arranged in a circle, evoking an image of both a campfire and a circus ring. The fields behind the main

property, called “Luther Hill” after longtime Greensboro visitor Luther Eisenhardt who was Albert Einstein’s protégé at Princeton, will provide space in the summer for the camp’s big top tents and a balance pavilion where kids will learn to walk on stilts and ride unicycles. Twenty-nine of the property’s approximate thirty-five acres will be placed into conservation easement.

Camp Director Megan Rose explained, “We had looked at several properties in the Northeast Kingdom and throughout Vermont, but nothing felt right. When I saw this property with its rolling, beautiful fields, just asking for circus tents, I knew this was the home we were looking for. Smirkus Camp’s destiny was confirmed the next day when we found a lone Circus Smirkus poster from 1990 hanging on the wall of the barn. This is a place where we can hang our history on the walls all year.”

“Forty-five years ago Smirkus founder Rob Mermin ran away to join the circus seeking a life of adventure,” said LeClair. “Today we are creating a home for kids to follow in his footsteps, and we are thrilled to be doing so in the Northeast Kingdom, in Greensboro, Vermont, which has already welcomed Smirkus for twenty-seven years.”

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