Meet RaeLeann Smith, Circus and Government Affairs Specialist

Prior to her arrival at PETA, RaeLeann Smith completed an MBA and landed a well-paying job at Morgan Stanley. But it wasn’t long before her passion for animal rights spurred her to apply for a job at PETA, where she’s been a model of successful activism for the past 10 years.

As PETA’s circus and government affairs specialist, RaeLeann spearheads a wide variety of initiatives. Primary among them is lobbying for legislation to prohibit the use of harmful devices such as bullhooks, chains, and electric prods on elephants. Not surprisingly, ringling and other circuses are throwing tons of resources into lobbying against such legislation. Nevertheless, we’re making slow but steady progress.

RaeLeann played a vital role in getting the Chicago City Council to introduce a precedent-setting elephant protection bill. Its passage would mean that training methods that subdue and dominate elephants with beatings and bullhooks would be illegal.

Last year, RaeLeann arranged for two important witnesses to testify at the hearing for the bill by the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation. Retired Palm Bay, Florida, Police Officer Blayne Doyle spoke of being forced to shoot a rampaging elephant named Jitbart who ran amok with a mother and five children on her back. Former Ringling employee Archelle Hurdley described a 30- to 45-minute beating of a chained elephant with a bullhook that left the animal bleeding from wounds on her face and body. Although the bill’s prospects are currently uncertain, we’re excited to have blazed the trail for future legislative efforts in Chicago and in cities around the U.S. to fight elephant abuse.

In addition, two delegates from Charleston, West Virginia, reintroduced state legislation to restrict cruel elephant-training methods after meeting with RaeLeann.

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Years of experience have made RaeLeann an expert in filing complaints with the USDA about abusive animal acts. Last year, after learning that an Asian elephant named Ned was being severely neglected by a Florida-based circus trainer (Ned was 2,000 pounds underweight!), RaeLeann didn’t hesitate to act: PETA’s complaint helped convince the USDA to remove the poor Ned, who was moved to an elephant sanctuary. By the time of his rescue, Ned’s health had deteriorated to such an extent that even the best medical treatment could only postpone his death by a few months. However, we are grateful that Ned’s last months on Earth were filled with the loving care he deserved and that he was finally free of the torment of bullhooks and chains.

RaeLeann joins all of us here at PETA in saying “Thank you!” for enabling us to make a difference in animals’ lives.

Earlier this year, the world lost one of the greatest animal advocates of all time, and animals lost one of their greatest defenders.

Bea Arthur helped us launch (and was a member of) our Augustus Club in addition to being an honorary PETA director and the winner of multiple PETA Humanitarian Awards. Her many contributions to PETA’s campaigns included starring in an anti-fur public service announcement, placing anti-fur ads in playbills, calling for a boycott of KFC because of its cruel factory-farming practices, campaigning against the force-feeding of ducks in the foie gras trade, and speaking out against animal experimentation.

I think of Bea often, and I think she would have particularly liked this issue of our newsletter because she was such a vocal opponent of the use of exotic animals in circuses. We dedicate this issue to the memory of the wonderful Bea Arthur.

I’ll never forget the first time I saw a circus and how appalled I was to see that animals were being beaten and intimidated into doing foolish tricks. What a cruel joke it was for the animal handlers to boast of their courage and death-defying prowess as they ruthlessly whipped terrified bears and lions who were defanged and declawed.

Circus public-relations fliers can deny that the animals are abused, but does anyone believe that a tiger would jump through a flaming hoop unless he or she knew that the alternative would be even worse? Back then, to speak out against circuses was practically considered blasphemy. Circuses provided fond childhood memories of family outings. But a lot has changed. PETA’s circus campaign has changed people’s attitudes over the years to such an extent that circus ticket prices have plummeted, audiences are sparse, and performance cancellations are increasingly common.

I hope you’ll enjoy reading about our circus campaign in this issue, as well as getting to know our circus specialist, RaeLeann Smith, who is profiled on page 8. We also have a lovely article from Augustus Club member Carol Anderson, who has taken up the cause of circus elephants in her community.

Now that summer is here, you won’t want to miss the chance to serve up some of the delicious vegan recipes in this issue. And for some summer fun, please have a go at our crossword puzzle on page 6 and test your animal rights knowledge.

I’m so glad to be able to share news of PETA’s work with you, knowing that you will be heartened by the progress for animals that is being made. Please know how thankful I am to you for making a lasting gift in support of PETA’s programs. Together, we’re making a difference!
It’s easy to see why—all it takes is one look at the video footage taken during PETA’s circus investigations. In one video, an elephant handler with the Carson & Barnes Circus shocks an elephant with an electric prod while instructing a trainee to “[m]ake ’em scream!” Ringling uses spiked clubs called “bullhooks” to intimidate elephants, digging the hooks into their sensitive ears, trunks, and legs. The circus forces elephants to travel around the country in poorly ventilated boxcars even when they are limping in pain. All of this has been documented in video footage taken by our Ringling trackers as they followed the circus on its tours.

Our Ringling trackers travel to dozens of cities, demonstrating outside performances, screening our footage on portable video monitors, distributing tens of thousands of leaflets detailing how Ringling abuses animals, and handing out comic books illustrating the plight of elephants in circuses. As a result, countless people around the country have embraced PETA’s message that circuses are no place for animals. For example, four families arrived at a Ringling performance in Denver and were on their way to buy tickets when they saw our trackers. After they spent 15 minutes talking with our team, they all left without buying tickets, and a 17-year-old girl from one of the families even returned later that week to protest with us!

After the tracking team’s tour in North Carolina, this terrific comment was posted on PETA’s blog: “Just wanted to thank you for the information given at the circus in Charlotte, N.C., this past weekend. As promised, I did check out the website and have shared that information with numerous co-workers and friends who also attend the circus here. As a result NONE of us will ever support an organization such as Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Thank you for taking your time to educate others about this horrible abuse! —Shari.”

In Cincinnati, our circus trackers encountered two restaurants that had Ringling promotional displays on their counters. After our team left a stack of DVDs and leaflets, one restaurant manager removed the Ringling display, and the other restaurant manager not only removed the display but also set up in its place a rack on the counter for our DVDs and leaflets! Thanks to PETA’s efforts, Ringling’s reputation also recently suffered a “black eye” in Cincinnati when a demonstration was held outside the show by some very special protesters—a group of nuns from the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. What a wonderful sign that segments of society who have not traditionally been active for animals are taking up the cause.

In addition to tracking the circus on tour, PETA also goes after Ringling in a variety of other ways with fantastic success. We have filed several formal complaints with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that have led to at least six separate federal investigations of the circus, and we are confident that Ringling will be held accountable for violations of the Animal Welfare Act.

When Denny’s—one of the largest restaurant chains in the U.S.—started holding promotions for Ringling, PETA responded with a barrage of actions, including protests at Denny’s headquarters and at company CEO Nelson Marchioli’s speaking engagements, mailings to the more than 1,300

Good Riddance to Animal Circuses

Most people in the U.S. grew up with certain attractions that were considered good, wholesome family entertainment (e.g., baseball games, carnivals, and amusement parks). For many families, animal circuses were at the top of that list. Thanks to PETA’s efforts over the past 29 years, however, animal circuses are increasingly falling out of favor with each new generation of parents.
Summer time Picnic Fun!

Creamy Potato Salad

Trick your friends with this improved, healthy version of this classic. They’ll be surprised to learn that it is free of milk, eggs, and cholesterol.

- 6 medium potatoes, boiled until tender
- ⅛ cup vegan mayonnaise
- ⅛ cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 cup chopped celery
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Paprika (optional)

Cut the potatoes into cubes. Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and season to taste. Sprinkle paprika on top, if desired.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

Georgia Peach Sweet Tea

In a large saucepan, bring the water to a boil. Remove from the heat and add the tea bags. Cover and steep for 5 minutes. Remove and discard the bags. Stir in the nectar, mint leaves, and vanilla into the pint-size zip bag and seal.

Place the pint-size zip bag inside the gallon-size plastic bag. Shake the bag for 5 to 7 minutes.*

Drain the tofu and cut it in half horizontally to make two pieces.

Wrap the tofu in a clean towel, then squeeze the soy ice cream into the cones, soft-serve style. Top with sprinkles, if desired.

*Note: Use oven mitts to prevent your hands from getting too cold.

Makes 2 servings

Marinated Barbecue Tofu Sandwich

Tofu has the ability to absorb flavor, so marinating it produces impressive results. Baking accents this flavor and creates a hearty texture.

- 1 lb. extra-firm tofu
- 1 cup barbecue sauce (or sweet and sour sauce, spicy salsa, or olive oil with your favorite seasoning)
- 4 whole-wheat sandwich rolls
- Sautéed onions, diced bell peppers, etc.

Brush the tofu with the barbecue sauce and cover the baking dish. Let the tofu marinate in the fridge for at least several hours. The longer the tofu marinates (up to five days), the more flavorful it will be.

Unwrap the tofu and place in a gallon-size plastic bag and seal. Shake the bag for 5 to 7 minutes.*

Drain the tofu and cut it in half horizontally to make two pieces.

Wrap the tofu in a clean towel, then squeeze the soy ice cream into the cones, soft-serve style. Top with sprinkles, if desired.

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Makes 2 servings

Shake-and-Make Soy Ice Cream

Fun with the kids and grandkids!

- 1 gallon-size plastic zip bag
- 6 Tbsp. rock salt
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- ½ cup vanilla soy milk
- ½ Tbsp. vanilla
- 1 pint-size plastic zip bag

Cones

- Multicolored sprinkles (optional)

- Fill the gallon-size plastic bag half full with ice. Add the rock salt and set aside.
- Pour the sugar, soy milk, and vanilla into the pint-size zip bag and seal.
- Place the pint-size zip bag inside the gallon-size zip bag and seal.
- Shake the bag for 5 to 7 minutes.*
- Use scissors to cut away a corner from the pint-size bag, then squeeze the soy ice cream into the cones, soft-serve style. Top with sprinkles, if desired.

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Makes 2 servings

You Can Help

If your local schools take students on field trips to circuses that use animals, please meet with the school board and ask that only animal-free circuses be patronized. A guide to help you approach your school board is available at Circuses.com or by calling Megan Grigorian at 735-622-7382, extension 8782.

Denny’s franchisees, personal meetings with restaurant managers, e-mail alerts to PETA members, a spoof Web site called “DeadlyDennys.com,” and a shareholder resolution calling on Denny’s to sever ties with Ringling.

PETA’s Gift & Estate Planning Club
We are leaving a legacy with everything that we do or don’t do. A few years ago, I became enraged when I found out that a traveling circus with elephants was coming to my Chicago suburb once again. I am proud to say that I did something about it. Rather than sitting and complaining about how this just shouldn’t be. Along with a group of caring people, I handed out brochures about the abuse of elephants in circuses and had one-on-one conversations with people as they entered (or in a couple of cases, changed their minds and decided not to enter!) the circus. I compiled information on elephants who perform and created informational packets, which I sent to the trustees of the venue that hosted the circus. I even spoke on TV in front of the mayor and City Council and gave them packets too. The mayor was particularly displeased because he was very eager to have his picture taken while riding on one of the elephants.

All of these actions were really outside of my comfort zone, but the trustees finally voted to discontinue having the event on their grounds! Wow. It was so satisfying to know that this decision was going to bring an end to the abuse of elephants. I have since learned that the circus will not be coming here again. Ultimately, that makes a big difference, and I was the person who caused that change.

Carol Anderson is a longtime PETA supporter, the guardian of two small dogs, and the CEO of Anderson Wealth Advisors LLC. She is also a guest blogger for PETAPrime.org.

See Page 8 for answers.
Bea Arthur was a true animal advocate.

Back then, to speak out against circuses was to risk being appalled. I was to see that animals were being beaten and intimidated into doing foolish tricks. What a cruel joke it was to force them to do things that broke their spirit and exercised their courage and death-defying prowess as they ruthlessly whipped terrified bears and lions who were defanged and declawed.

I’ll never forget the first time I saw a circus and how particularly disturbed I was by the treatment of the animals. Elephants were being thrown into a bullhook and a electric prodd that left the animal bleeding from wounds on her face and body. Although the bullhook’s prospects are uncertain, I’m excited to have blazed the trail for future legislative efforts in Chicago and in cities around the U.S. to fight elephant abuse.

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