

Jaycees mounting own circus

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When Rob Budney and fellow Naperville Jaycees were lamenting the dearth of inexpensive family activities available these days, they hit upon an idea: Why not organize a family-oriented show and charge modest prices?

The result is the Naperville Jaycees Family Circus, an extravaganza that will be presented April 29 at North Central College's Memer Field House.

The aim is to give families with young children a fun day out at a reasonably low price. Tickets will be \$5 per person and concessions will be available for \$1 and \$2 per item, he said.

At the same time, proceeds from the event will benefit local charities, Budney said.

The show will feature feats performed by students of the Evanston-based Actors Gymnasium.

"We're a circus and performing arts school," said Andrew HunzekerHesed, the school's special events director. "We've got a panoply of acts coming that are pretty exciting."

The Actors Gymnasium Teen Ensemble, composed of performers ages 14, 15 and 16, will show off their unicycle riding and aerial work, he said.

Adult students will do a silk dance and a Russian bar routine that involves "somebody balancing on a pole and getting shot into the air," HunzekerHesed said.

The Actors Gymnasium's participation also will include a troupe of clowns known as the Circus Crashers, he said.

In all, about 25 performers from the Actors Gymnasium will juggle, dance, mug for the crowd and defy gravity at the Jaycees' circus, he said.

"The last thing of this scale was something we did at the Museum of Science and Industry a couple of years ago," he said.

The circus also will feature performances by the Mucca Pazza Circus Marching Band, a collection of 26 Chicago-area musicians who perform an eclectic musical concoction of punk and marching band music.

And there will be animals. Dogs that catch flying discs will demonstrate their prowess, Budney said.

Tom Wehrli, coordinator of the Windy City K9 Disc Club, said members Jessica Ritchie, Mare Potts and Tony Aguirre, all national championship finalists, will perform with their disc-catching dogs.

"They're all choreographed routines set to music," Wehrli said.

Because this is the first time the club is presenting a circus, it's tough to predict how much it will raise for charities, though Budney said organizers hope it will generate about \$25,000.

Shows are scheduled for 11 a.m., and 2:30 and 6 p.m. April 29 at the field house, 450 S.

Brainard St., Naperville. Each show will run about two hours with a 15-minute intermission, said Budney, who is overseeing the circus with co-chair Ann Goulet.

Tickets are available at several local merchants, he said. A complete list of sellers is on the Naperville Jaycees Web site, www.naperjaycees.org.

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