

## The circus is in town Jaycees Family Circus wows them at - college

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Just for Saturday, Memer Field House at North Central College was turned into The Big Top.

Gymnasts achieved feats of balance and grace, acrobatic stilt-walkers amazed with choreographed routines, unicyclists synchronized to perform a dance on wheels.

And dogs and their trainers showed off agility and athleticism.

It was the first-ever Naperville Jaycees Family Circus.

As families settled into bleachers and the balcony, the smell of popcorn hung in the air and children clutched inflatable lions, elephants, monkeys, giraffes and zebras.

The Pianovski family of Aurora heard about the circus through a flier circulated at Cowlshaw Elementary School, where 10-year-old Austin Pianovski is a student.

"They've never been to a circus," said Austin's mother, Jennifer, seated next to her husband, Mike, and daughter Makenzie, 4. "So, we thought, why not? It's affordable."

When the lights dimmed, members of the Chicago-based Mucca Pazza Astounding Circus Punk Marching Band emerged from backstage, playing drums, tuba, trombone, saxophone and accordion.

Ringmaster Andrew HunzekerHesed, special events director at the Evanston-based Actors Gymnasium, introduced the school's Teen Ensemble gymnastics group and, later, members of the Windy City Canine Disc Club and their dogs.

Patricia Showalter of Aurora held her daughter, Cadence, 2, on her lap as the dogs jumped to catch flying discs. Cadence's twin 9-year-old sisters, Melody and Jazzmin, sat on the floor closer to the action.

"They've gone to bigger circuses," said Showalter. "I thought this was a nice activity and not a far drive."

On the other side of the tent, six boys were celebrating Naperville resident Bryce Carter's sixth birthday. Jean Jepson, the mother of one of Carter's guests, Tommy Jepson, 5, of Naperville, watched the show as she stood holding two inflatable monkeys.

"I think it's really entertaining," she said. "I think the kids are having a really nice time. They've got some interesting acts."

The show continued with a dog that can jump rope, an acrobat who bounced off a bar into the air and more music. An aerial ballet that was to be part of the show was removed from the bill at the last minute, said event co-chairman Rob Budney, because of "technical difficulties."

Overall, he said, the circus went off well.

"We did OK. We're not going to sell out but did OK for a first-year event," said Budney.

Budney said the idea was to bring affordable family entertainment to Naperville while raising funds for the charities supported by the Naperville Jaycees.

**Caption:** Ottavio Canestrelli sinks into a broken chair for his physical comedy act during the Family Circus at North Central College in Naperville. Marcelle Bright/Daily Herald Alex "Popeye" Rothacker, left, runs the rope as his dog Swee'Pea, jumps it with Mansi Shah, 9, center, of Aurora, and Kayla O'Sullivan, 7, of Downers Grove, during the Naperville Jaycee's Family Circus at North Central College in Naperville. Marcelle Bright/Daily Herald

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