

# CIRCUS CAMP NEWS



**ONLINE VERSION** Featuring All The News We Can Fit .....

**Finally Another Edition, August 14, 2008**



# Circus Camp Celebrates Fifteen Years

**The Berkshire Children's Circus Camp began over a decade ago as a wonderful idea in the mind of a Mount Greylock High School teacher and circus aficionado, Dick Hamilton.**

Dick had been a fan of the circus since childhood, when his Dad would pack him and his brothers into the car and head for the Big Top. Dick's love of the circus never waned, and in the years before retiring his thoughts turned to the idea of creating a circus camp for children who were every bit as wide-eyed and curious about circuses as he was as a kid. In 1993 he met with Alexandra Warshaw, Berkshire Community College's Director of the Continuing Education division of the school, and together they formed a partnership that continues to make the dream of a children's circus, a reality.

But Dick also needed individuals trained in the sometimes-difficult circus arts. His contacts with

## Parents Perform Spectacularly - Clown Awards to All of Them

Family Night was a huge success with about 200 aspiring circus artists who never thought they'd ever be photographed doing incredible feats of amazing dexterity and grace. And here are the photographs to prove that you are never too young, or too busy, mature, parent-like, etc. to join the circus:



circus professionals afforded him connections that would prove invaluable to the creation of the fledgling children's circus project. Among those circus artists whose expertise laid the foundation for the camp's unique educational vision, were Jessica Hentoff and Michael Killian of St. Louise, Missouri. These noted circus performers jumped at the opportunity to work with children in a camp designed to teach the circus arts. They loaded their trailer with circus props, headed east to Pittsfield and the Berkshire Children's Circus Camp was born, one of the first of its kind in the nation.

Hentoff and Killian continued to work with the camp every year, and are still part of the camp's advisory team. The camp continues to attract skilled teachers including a professional aerialist, clowns and circus actors who have performed and taught for such organizations as Ringling Brothers and Circus Smirkus. Children learn a variety of circus arts including unicycle, trapeze and aerial acts, juggling and balancing acts, and the much loved clown act, an indispensable part of every circus performance. They also learn performance crafts, such as set design, and are taught the rich history of the circus.

In the fifteen years since



its inception, the camp has continued to grow. Currently there are sixty campers attending the program, ages 8 to 15. While many of the children come from Western Massachusetts towns and cities such as Pittsfield, Lenox, Great Barrington, Dalton, Northampton and Westfield, they also travel from New York and other states to attend this day camp.

In the past five years, under the artistic direction of Creative Director, Warren Bacon, the camp has progressed light years. Warren introduced a very well thought out circus arts curriculum and methodology for teaching circus arts to young people. Campers now learn fundamental lessons on trust, patience, resourcefulness, and perseverance and the efficacy of team spirit.

The success of the Circus day camp has spawned a new program, the first of its kind anywhere in the United States, an intergenerational circus through Elderhostel. Also under Warren Bacon's creative direction, this effort has been phenomenally successful and grandparents and their grandchildren come from all over the country to work on circus skills for a week.

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Our Berkshire Children's Circus Camp remains the jewel in the crown of children's programs here at BCC. At the end of every three-week camp season, campers perform two shows for the general public. A live circus band accompanies the gravity-defying trapeze acts, whirlwind unicycle skits, jamboree juggling feats and the hilarity of small madcap clowns. For the audience, it's pure amazement that children could put on such an outstanding show. For the campers, it's an opportunity to show off their new skills and gain confidence. And best of all,