

Circus City Festival, Inc. Scholarship Fund

Nowhere else in the country is “professional circus performer” a perfectly normal, acceptable career goal. Fortunately, Peru, Indiana is no normal town, but an incredibly unique one. Peru is a circus town.

From the late 1800's through the 1930s, Peru served as the Winter Quarters for various circuses and performers around the world including; American Circus Corp., John Robinson Shows, Great Wallace Shows, Clyde Beatty, and Emmet Kelly. Unfortunately, a devastating fire one winter destroyed a large amount of equipment stored there. When the remaining equipment was bought by Ringling Bros. and moved out of the area, Peru's circus days seemed to be over.

During the 1950s, a group of retired performers who had remained in the area banded together to reawaken their circus heritage. The Peru Circus was created in 1959 and the Circus City Festival followed shortly after in 1960.

The Peru Circus was a youth circus trained by retired performers which took place in a small tent by the tennis courts. Eventually, the circus outgrew the location and was moved to an old lumberyard in 1986 where the current building was built.

Today the Peru Circus is the largest amateur circus in the world with approximately 225 performers between the ages of 7 and 21. These performers put on a variety of acts including the High Wire, Flying Trapeze, Teeterboard, and others. A 60-piece instrumental ensemble performs throughout the approximately 3-hour-long event.

Although the performers are amateurs, they are highly skilled individuals. Many are trained by professional performers and some even go on to perform professionally themselves. Many families in the community boast about having three or four generations of circus performers.

CCFI board member, Kurt Krauskopf, has been involved in the Peru Circus since he was 6-years-old. His father was instrumental in the founding of the circus and performed as an adult clown, and Kurt himself performed as a clown until he was 21-years-old.

“When the excitement of the circus gets in your blood, you just want to do it,” Kurt says.

The same phrase was echoed by Sandy Ploss, one of the producers of the Peru Circus. “It's true,” Ploss says, “You just get circus in your blood.”

Even with the immense enthusiasm of its coordinators and the talented performers, the Peru Circus would not be possible without the generosity of its donors.



In 1998, a resident of Miami County passed away, leaving a generous amount of her estate to various organizations in the community—one of these being the Peru Circus. With this generous gift, the Circus City Festival Board was able to establish the Circus City Festival, Inc. Scholarship Fund with the Miami County Community Foundation.

With this fund, the CCFI Board is able to award scholarships to students who have participated in the Peru Circus for at least three years of high school.

“People tell me that they want to give back to their community,” Kurt says, “and I direct them right to the Community Foundation.”

Because of the Community Foundation, this wonderful and unique piece of Miami County will remain a part of the community for years to come and young circus performers will continue to be able to chase their dreams.

