

Crowds turn out for Circus Bella shows in Laguna

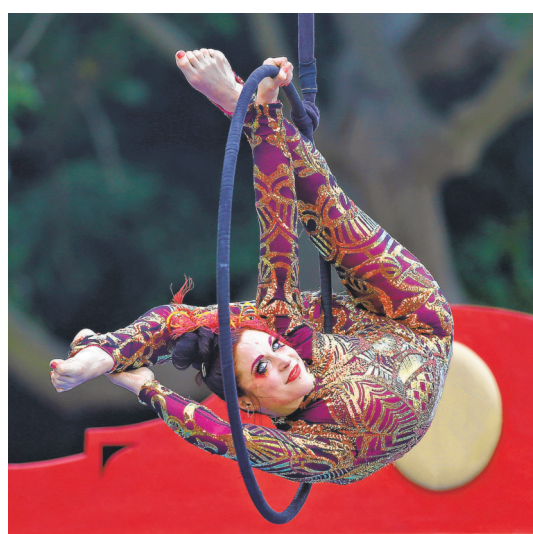
Residents and visitors flocked to Bluebird Park on Saturday, as Circus Bella returned to Laguna Beach with two free shows over the weekend.

Circus Bella rolled out its 14th annual summer season show, “Bananas,” a family-friendly event for children of all ages.

After the shows rose to popularity locally during the coronavirus pandemic, a sizable crowd turned out again for the one-ring outdoor act.

The masses were entertained by aerialists, acrobats, clowns, jugglers and unicyclists. The show was directed by Circus Bella co-founder Abigail Munn.

Music for the show was composed by Rob Reich, who plays both accordion and key-



AERIALIST DWORJA GALILEA twirls and twists during her act at the Circus Bella “Bananas” show.

board. The six-piece Circus Bella All-Star Band also included violinist Clare Armenante, trumpet player Ian Carey, saxophone player Kasey Knudsen, percussionist Michael Pinkham

and Jonathan Seiberlich on the tuba.

Free to the public, the performances were funded by the lodging establishments and the city of Laguna Beach.

— Andrew Turner



KIDS GET a front-row view of Natasha Kaluza, who entertains on the floor of the Circus Bella “Bananas” show at Bluebird Park in Laguna Beach on Saturday. The family-friendly event was free to the public.

Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

Daily Pilot

A Times Community News publication.

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The Daily Pilot, established in 1907, is published Wednesday through Sunday by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

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SALUTE

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cans know how to honor and pay tribute to those who put themselves in harm’s way,” Dunsmore said.

The guest of honor at Sunday’s event, which featured dozens of Vietnam War veterans, was Huntington Beach resident Emily Sanford. Born in 1935, she served in the U.S. Navy for 27 years before retiring in the 1980s, after overcoming many challenges and obstacles she faced serving as a Black woman.

Orange County Supervisor Don Wagner, a member of the Angel Force USA board, presented Sanford with a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors recognizing her for her many years of service.

“The scourge of veteran suicide is real, but the opportunity every one of us has to make a difference is equally real,” Wagner said.

“If you see a veteran, see someone struggling, it’s real easy to ask a question. It’s real easy to offer a helping hand. It’s real easy to perhaps be the person who saves the life of someone who put their life on the line for you.”

Mike Ali, another Vietnam War veteran and owner of nearby Zack’s by the Beach, also shared some words. Ali is a member of American Legion Post 133; other members of the post presented the colors to open the ceremony.

Mayor Tony Strickland and Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark and Councilman Casey McKeon were on hand at Sunday’s event.

Strickland, a member of the Angel Force USA board, said he wants to make it an annual event.



GUESTS RECITE the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the Surf City Salute to Veterans on Sunday.

James Carbone

“What we hope to get out of this is awareness, so we bring it up in our families when we know veterans and see some of the signs,” Strickland said.

“But also, from a policy standpoint, to hopefully lobby Sacramento for more funding for mental health issues to hopefully come down to the county and to the city level. I do believe a lot of our homeless are PTSD veterans, and I think we need to

work on how to be effective with that funding. I think we need to help with a lot of these silent scars that a lot of our veterans have.”

The event concluded Sunday afternoon with music from Grammy-winning artists including Frank Simes, Dick Bright, Steve Distanislaio and others.

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