

BETHEL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Bethel, CT, 06801

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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P.T. BARNUM'S HOMETOWN CELEBRATES HIS 200TH BIRTHDAY

—Community Commemorates Founding Father of The American Circus With Its Own Blend of Unusual Entertainment—

Bethel, CT (June 16, 2010) – Proud citizens of P.T. Barnum's hometown of Bethel, CT, will celebrate his 200th birthday on **Monday July 5th from 6 pm to 9 pm at the Bethel Municipal Center**, not far from the actual birthplace of "America's Greatest Showman." The circus-like birthday party -- which will be free, open to the public, and staged by local community volunteers -- will include such unusual entertainment as a 570 Pound birthday cake, "Patrick" the 6-horned Jacob's Ram, "Jimmy- Jo" the Zee-Donk (half zebra-half donkey), "Pollyanna" the Camel, Zooky the Clown, jugglers, fire spinners, stilt walkers, unicyclists, acrobats, belly dancers, and live music by the nine piece J&B Band.

Also on hand will be author A.H. Saxon of Fairfield, CT, who has written over 100 books and articles on Barnum, the circus, theatre and pop entertainment. Saxon will give a short presentation about the town's storied parcel of land known as Ivy Island, which was bequeathed to Barnum after his father's death and turned out to be more swamp than valuable real estate.

Capping off the evening's festivities will be the parading of a 575 pound birthday cake--created by local Steve Varano of Varano's Bakery--to the town gazebo where the townspeople will sing "Happy Birthday" to Barnum, a man who began as a local entrepreneur and eventually became an internationally acclaimed legend.

Dubbed America's Greatest Showman, Barnum (1810-1891) became the richest man in America during his lifetime by putting on shows that featured unusual and often freakish acts. At times he was considered a shameless

profit seeker but after his death his works of philanthropy revealed themselves. Among those was his little known role in getting both Tufts University and Bridgeport Hospital off the ground. His shows were predecessors to what is known today as Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey Circus.

Event organizer and lifetime Bethel resident Billy Michael stressed that this celebration is being funded by voluntary contributions from both individuals and businesses that wish to honor a hometown hero who has captured the curiosity and imaginations of multitudes for well over a century. "Having lived my entire life in Bethel, I was able to connect the dots and put together the resources to make this come together," says Michael. "It will be terrific family fun, open to the public and free of charge. A perfect tribute to Barnum!"

The eventful day will begin with the annual Firecracker Road Race. More info at <http://www.roadtracksports.com>. In addition, the Bethel Historical Society will sponsor tours of the P.T. Barnum House. For tour information, call 203-794-1050.

As for the evening birthday party, picnic baskets, blankets and folding chairs are encouraged. For further info, call Scholarship for the Arts (203) 743-2456 or go to www.townofbethel.org

Note: An additional commemorative event will be held in September when a statue of Barnum will be unveiled in his honor at the Bethel Public Library.