

Personal Statement and Fellowship Experience Proposal

It is my desire to use the Stuart R. Givens Memorial Fellowship to help me achieve one of my dreams, recreating the circus sideshow. My goal isn't just to recreate a circus sideshow but hopefully to help revive this nearly dead art form.

I believe the circus sideshow needs to be revived for several reasons. The first being that the circus sideshow is one of the very few art forms that is indigenous to the United States of America. If the sideshow was lost we would lose a very interesting and colorful part of American history. The sideshow embraced the weird, the odd, and the bizarre and because of this, thousands of teenagers and young adults who felt that they didn't fit in with society found comfort in the sideshow. The sideshow also offered a place of hope, a place where mainstream society could forget all of their troubles for an hour. With a parade of fire eaters, sword swallows, girls who eat broken glass, contortionists, and much more it wasn't a surprise the sideshow provided a much needed break from society. The sideshow helped many Americans find some joy during the Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. With the constant fear of terrorism looming over our heads, a struggling economy, and two wars that aren't going as well as we planned, the American people need the sideshow once again.

The sideshow has the potential to help change society, and that's exactly how I plan on using it. When a young kid sees somebody eat fire or swallowing sword they are looking at the closest things to real live superheroes they may ever see. They are looking at human beings doing the impossible. Kids who witness these acts walk off with a sense that they can do anything; if they can dream it they can do it.

Sideshows can also help people learn and celebrate genetic diversity. The sideshow is filled with a rich history of four legged girls, bearded ladies, and half men. I plan to have educational exhibits about these wonderful performers showing today's public that people can still be beautiful even if they don't have arms or have extra fingers. The public can learn so much from the stories of the past sideshow greats. For example there was a half woman (a half person is a performer missing the lower half of their body) named Jeanie Tomaini who performed an acrobatic act that most "normal people" couldn't even dream of doing. By exposing the public to these stories people will realize just because somebody is born different doesn't mean they are incapable of doing things "normal" people can do, and, in several cases they can go up and beyond what was most "normal" people can do. I want to use the sideshow as a way to help breakdown the wall between the physically handicapped and "normal" society.

Between the awe inspired by the acts in the show and the inspiration from sideshow greats of yesteryear I want the audience to walk away knowing that they can do whatever they want to do with their lives as long as they are determined. I am a firm believer that the biggest problem with my generation is a lack of dedication. There are too many people my age that don't care enough about anything to do anything about anything. My hopes is that the sideshow can start inspiring people to find out their true potential. Once they realize they have that endless potential they are unstoppable.

I plan to use the Fellowship to help complete my dream. I have already started to lay the ground work for a full fledged circus sideshow. I have trained ten BGSU students in the sideshow arts that I would use as my performers. We put together a half hour show, Circus Vera, where we performed at the Arts Village, Homecoming Parade, Black Swamp Arts Festival, and ArtsX. I learned a lot from these shows about what circus and sideshow acts people find entertaining today which will help me attract an audience with the sideshow. I have also secured a used tent that the show could use for the performances. It took me the last year and a half to be able to raise enough money to purchase that tent. I believe this and the work I have done with training performers shows extreme dedication to this dream and I hope that helps reassure the committee that I will use the Fellowship wisely and stick through it.

With the help of the Fellowship I could purchase aerial rigging to help modernize the show and diversify the performance. I would also use it to purchase sound systems for the show. The rest of the funds would be used to create social programs such as the educational displays about the sideshow performers of yesterday that was mentioned earlier. The goal of these educational displays is to delineate what it means to be physically handicapped and communicate that although people may be physically handicapped, they are still capable of the same things we are, they might just have to do it in a different way.

The Fellowship would enable to create an authentic circus sideshow, which would only be the fourth sideshow to tour with live performers on the planet. I already have county fairs from North Carolina to Ohio interested in helping revive the circus sideshow by sponsoring the show at their fairs. Between those connections and the Stuart R. Givens Fellowship I will be able to help create a sideshow that's mission is for social change.

I would plan for the show to begin touring around Memorial Day weekend and go to the beginning of August. The show would be transported in a trailer owned by my family and pulled by own vehicle which also would be the transportation for the performers. We would receive a portion of the ticket sales from the fairs which will help pay for all the running costs of the show that the Fellowship would not cover.

I have worked for the World of Wonders Sideshow and the Palace of Illusions Combined Circus Sideshow, which the last full sized traveling circus sideshow left in the world. I learned the ins and the outs of the industry and what it takes to keep a show on the road. I plan to use those skills to manage the sideshow this summer. I am fully aware of all of the permits needed and what it takes to obtain those permits.

I hope you consider my proposal for recreating and helping revive the American circus sideshow. I also thank you for taking the time to read this proposal. I have spent years and hundreds of hours dreaming about creating a circus sideshow that can both inspire people to follow their dreams and help bridge the gap between the physically disabled. I like to call them genetic beauties because I feel the word disabled is too dirty and that we should celebrate our uniqueness. That uniqueness is what makes us beautiful. With

How?

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what are they?

the Stuart R. Givens Fellowship my dream can come true. Ultimately, my dream coming true entails the dreams of others also becoming true.

Budget Proposal

18'6" Aerial Rigging - \$2,600

The aerial equipment would allow us to provide safe and thrilling aerial acts. Aerial acts would help modernize the sideshow.

- No stakes or cables needed
- All sections are 6'8" inches long or less
- The crane bar (top section) can be hung on its own in a building and rigged with cables (supplied) and ratchets.
- Comes with foot pads with rubber soles for concrete or wood floors.
- Set up takes 2 people and 10 minutes
- Made out of polished aluminum

Eight Coleman Overnighter SpaceSaver Cots - \$800

The cots would provide a place for the performers of the show to sleep.

-30"x80"x18"

- Sleeps up to two people 6'8" tall (with mattress separate from cot)
- Airtight System guaranteed not to leak
- Keep small items close at hand with handy storage pocket organizer
- ComfortSmart coil system contours to your body for better support
- Double Lock Valve - Two sealing points guarantees a leak-free valve
- Detachable air mattress and cot can be used separately or together
- Bed cover can be washed in cool water and line dried
- Lightweight aluminum frame
- Camping Cot - Limited Three year warranty
- Airbed - Limited One year warranty, cot - Limited Three year warranty
- Patents Pending

Five Display Easels - \$170

The display easels would be used for five educational displays about the various performers that used to perform in sideshows.

Two Phonic Powerpad 410/S710 PA System - \$400

The show would need two sound systems. One would be for inside the tent to provide music to enhance the acts. The other would be used for the bally shows in front of the main show. A bally show takes place outside of the tent and is a free two act show that entices people to buy a ticket to see the main show.

Each sound system would include:

Powerpod 410 Powered Mixer

- Built-in 100w power amplifier
- Four mic/line input channels
- Variable digital delay
- XLR and 1/4 stereo jack for external signal to use the built-in power amplifier and sending Main output to external power amplifier

- Super musical Two-band EQ at mono channels
- Additional 1/4" stereo jack for external signal to use the built-in power amplifier and sending Main output to external power amplifier.
- Tape in and Record out for CD or tape player
- Two 1/4" phone jacks for speaker connection

S710 10" Two-way Speakers

- Use as floor monitors or mounted main speakers
- 10" heavy-duty woofer and piezo tweeter
- Built-in handle
- Dual 1/4" phone jacks
- 35mm stand adapter built-in

Two American DJ LS-70 L.E.D. Portable Lighting Package \$240

This lighting package would offer the most high tech and innovative lighting system in the sideshow industry today.

Package includes:

- Four PAR 38 polished PAR Cans
- Four medium screw base LED bulbs rated at 30,000 hr. life (1 red, 1 yellow, 1 green, 1 blue)
- One T16F Chase controller
- One LTS-6 Light stand

Miscellaneous Expenses - \$500

These expenses would include paint, fabric, and hardware that would be used to create displays, a circus ring, and general improvement to the equipment that I had built throughout the last year and a half such as the bed of nails, electric girl illusion, and machete ladder.

Start up funding - \$500

This would provide start up costs for the show including gas and food-for the performers

Total budget: \$5120