

28 August 2018

Dear Mr. Paul Leavy,

Our attempts to communicate with you by phone and registered mail have all gone unanswered. In an effort to uncover the truth, we are posting this open letter to you. Would you kindly address the following questions?



How much money raised by the circus actually goes to the hospitals?

While the Shriner’s charitable fundraisers benefit the hospitals, the circus is a fraternal fundraiser where the money goes to the temples. Looking at the Syria Shrine 990s, we can see that donations to the hospitals have been steadily decreasing over the past several years – as have your circus profits.

Is this what the Shriners call “humane”?

The attached video is undercover footage of Becky the elephant being severely abused with a bullhook. This video is very difficult to watch, but please view it as Becky was one of the elephants who came to Pittsburgh in the 2017 Syria Shrine circus. No animal deserves this!

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWIFDD9-QpM

Where are the animals for the 2018 circus coming from?

Every single company the Shriners subcontracted their animals from in 2017 has extensive violations of public safety and animal abuse from the USDA. Please publish the companies supplying animals for your September 2018 show.

Isn’t it time to change your antiquated circus model?

The Shriners should consider giving up animals and dropping their expensive and time-consuming lawsuit against the city. Why not host a humane circus that we can all enjoy? We will be in the front row!

It’s not too late to do the right thing.

Much of the information contained in this letter comes from direct sources which have already been substantiated. However, we would like to give you the opportunity to present us with any information or evidence to the contrary. Sadly, we believe the evidence is clear. The Shrine Circus has a long history of hiring circus contractors known to neglect and abuse their animals.

If inflicting pain is absolutely necessary to run your circus then we must ask you to do the only honorable thing and take the animals out of your show. Having the Shriner’s name become synonymous with animal abuse doesn’t help children.

We at HUMANE ACTION Pittsburgh prefer to build bridges rather than walls. With that, we extend our offer to help you rebrand your circus into a humane one.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Bonsteel
HAP President and Founder

Natalie Ahwesh
HAP Vice President