



October 8, 2018

Michael Poplawski, Director
Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Newport News
Via email: nnparks-and-recreation@nnva.gov, festivals@nnva.gov

Dear Mr. Poplawski,

A recent article in the Daily Press highlighted the appearance of Jerry Brown “The Monkey Man” and his capuchin monkey, Django, at the Newport News Fall Festival. The article quotes Jerry Brown as admitting that fairgoers try to “mess with the monkey” and that children are often frightened when Django climbs on them – which is an appropriate reaction, and one that is likely mutual. The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) respectfully asks you that you reconsider the inclusion of this attraction into your entertainment lineup due to animal welfare and public safety concerns.

While it may seem amusing on the surface, encouraging contact between humans and exotic animals like Django is harmful and dangerous to all involved, and very frowned upon by authorities. There is a reason why sanctuaries never permit public contact with their animals - because of the high risks of disease transfer and injury to both the animals and the humans. Primates can never be domesticated. Monkeys typically find public places frightening and stressful, and granting fairgoers access to agitated monkey is a disaster waiting to happen. Primate bites are not a question of “if”, but of “when.”

NAPSA is a coalition of nine of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 750 primates, many of whom were formerly privately owned as pets or entertainers. We see daily, lifelong effects of maternal deprivation from infant primates who were bred for training as entertainers, including social disorders, self-injurious behavior and depression. Jerry Brown has had Django since she was 10 days old. She should have been with her mother for years beyond that.

An increasing number of attractions have forsworn attractions with performing primates, including the Cecil County Fair (MD), Northport Firemen’s Fair (NY), and the Alachua County Fair (FL.) Negative publicity and protests have occurred outside fairs hosting monkey entertainment. Minor League Baseball teams The Williamsport Crosscutters, The Lexington Legends, The Sugar Land Skeeters, The Long Island Ducks, and the Hartford Yard Goats, as well as Northwoods League team The Kalamazoo Growlers and the Madison Mallards have all chosen to avoid such exploitive and archaic forms of “entertainment” at their games.

NAPSA urges you to follow the compassionate lead of your peers and prohibit this monkey business, for the good of the animals and public perception of the Newport News Fall Festival.

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury
Program Director