



Amelia Brown, 8, was one of the Lone Star Circus School students who got to dress up during a tour of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at American Airlines Center.

Circus Students Get Shot at Big Top

Ringling Bros. pulls back curtain

BY CLAIRE ST. AMANT
Staff Writer

Who says you have to run away from home to join the circus?

Twenty-six students from Lone Star Circus School were given a rare treat Tuesday as they performed alongside professionals from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at American Airlines Center.

Lone Star Circus School, an after-school program at Dallas International School, is the only professional circus training program in Texas. Abby Olson, 7, has been in it for three years.

Abby, one of nine students from Preston Hollow who participated Tuesday, enjoys trapeze, silk acrobatics, rings, and contortions. Her mother, JoAnn Olson, is glad her daughter is involved.

"It's great exercise. I can't believe how strong her arms and legs are now," she said.



Clair McFadden, 8, has some makeup applied before participating in a pre-show performance.

ONLINE EXTRA

To see a video of Jesse Patterson's Hula Hoop act, visit prestonhollowpeople.com

Before taking part in a pre-show performance, the students were given an all-access tour that included a walk-through of the clown dressing room and up-close views of the elephants, zebras, and horses. The students then hit the main stage

for coaching from professional performers.

Thirteen-year-old Jesse Patterson used the tutorial time to work on her Hula Hoop act, in which she uses hoops on all four appendages.

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Other students practiced plate spinning, ball-walking, silk acrobatics, juggling, and tumbling.

Jesse's mother, Cynthia Patterson, thinks having her children enrolled in circus is a unique opportunity in Dallas.

"Cirque is such a European thing," she said. "It's neat that we can participate in it here."

Fanny Kerwich, founder and creative director of Lone Star Circus School, arranged for her students to visit the Ringling Bros. Circus because she believed it would motivate and inspire them.

"It is very nourishing to see the passion for circus that the professionals have," Kerwich said. "It's a dream come true for my students."

This is the first year Lone Star Circus has participated with Ringling Bros., but Kerwich hopes it is the start of an annual event. Once a performer in circuses all over the world, she hails from a well-known French circus family. While on tour in Dallas, she fell in love and decided to leave the circus to get married. Kerwich started Lone Star Circus School in 2006.

"I could not live without the circus," she said.

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Circus clown Todd Griffith helps Mika Davis, 6, balance a plate.



Amelia Brown, 8, has some makeup applied before hitting the stage to participate in a pre-show performance with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at American Airlines Center.



Richard Stringer introduces 26 students from Lone Star Circus School – including nine children from the Preston Hollow area – to "the Greatest Show on Earth."



Francesca Gilbard climbs a silk rope with a boost from Ringling Bros. performer Lu Sosa.



Alexandra Ramsland and Amelia Brown, both 8, share a hug during a tour at American Airlines Center on Tuesday.