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# THE GREAT ALL-AMERICAN YOUTH CIRCUS

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## PARENT & PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK 2025 -2026 SEASON

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## **WELCOME TO THE GREAT Y CIRCUS!**

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### **GREAT Y CIRCUS: HISTORY & MISSION**

Founded in 1929 by YMCA Director Roy Coble, a former Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey performer, the Great Y Circus is a unique tradition in Redlands, California. It is the oldest community circus in the world and one of only a few programs like it in the United States. The Great Y Circus started small as a "family fun night" and has grown tremendously throughout the years.

The Great Y Circus is a Redlands Family YMCA program and is organized by YMCA staff. The Great Y Circus is funded through performances, fundraisers, class fees and YMCA memberships. Unlike other youth activities, Circus is noncompetitive and focuses on individual and group skills presented in an entertaining and artistic theatrical performance, with choreography, lighting, costumes and music.

The Circus program emphasizes teamwork, dedication, trust, family bonding, skill, showmanship, excitement and fun for both the participant and the observer. Circus teaches young people important values, such as responsibility, commitment, self-confidence and self-discipline, along with specialized skills. The Great Y Circus is supported primarily by family, friends and volunteers, as well as many alumni who have gone on to become professionals, who return to help the next generation learn circus skills.

Students work hard throughout the season; following the YMCA philosophy of "building a strong body, mind, and spirit". Circus inspires the highest potential of personal achievement in each child, and their energy and enthusiasm to do their best is contagious! Circus becomes a second family for children and adults alike; making it truly one of our most unique programs.

### **REGISTRATION & PAYMENT FOR CIRCUS CLASSES**

Circus participants must have a facility membership to the YMCA in order to register for classes. Pre-registration is required for all classes, with payment for each new session made by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month. Outstanding balance dues could result in your child(ren) being removed from their classes.

You are required to sign up for an EFT (electronic funds transfer) payment to ensure that your class fees are paid on time each month. EFT debits can be charged to your checking, savings or credit card account on the 10<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> day of each month for the following month's session. Cancellation requires a 5-day written notice before the day of withdrawal. Cancelling your Circus class enrollment will not cancel your YMCA membership. All payments for Circus classes will take place at the Membership Desk or through your online account.

When registering for any circus classes, participants must meet the minimum age requirement by the first day of class.

### **CIRCUS CLASS FEES**

Class Fees for the upcoming Circus season are \$50 per act monthly and \$400/family rate per month. (The family rate offers one overall fee that covers all participants within the same household, if and when their class fees total over \$400.) Please note that members using the family rate must be in the same household and on the same YMCA membership account and meet the membership category requirements. You may register for up to five classes if you have met the prerequisites for those classes.

### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The YMCA of the East Valley's goal is not to turn anyone away from participating in our programs because of an inability to pay. The YMCA provides financial assistance, based on need, to those demonstrating they are unable to pay in full. The YMCA's financial aid applications are available at the Front Desk.

## **CREDITS & REFUNDS**

Program Fees – After the session start date (the 1<sup>st</sup> day of each month for Circus), no transfers, credits or refunds of a program will be issued without a written excuse. For cancellations prior to a program session starting, one of the following may be requested with Director Approval:

- Transfer to another YMCA program
- YMCA credit towards future use of programs (expires one year from date of issuance)
- Refund (if approved)

## **PARTICIPATION & PERFORMANCE IN CIRCUS CLASSES**

Participants enrolled in circus classes will learn the skills involved in very specific circus acts. Participants will be expected to attend every class; arriving 10 minutes early to help with the set-up of equipment, or staying later to help with clean-up. Participants are not allowed to participate in any classes that “overlap”.

Parents are invited to attend the first class with their child(ren) so that they can hear the Trainer’s introduction and orientation “first hand”. Parents are also encouraged to observe any/all classes throughout the season. Participants must be picked up directly after their classes have ended; no child, under the age of 15, should be left unattended at any time.

Enrollment in classes does not guarantee a performing spot in the annual show for any participant. Participants must continually demonstrate a positive attitude, maintain regular attendance in their classes, be respectful of their trainers and other participants, as well as, be able to perform all of the required skills for their act before consideration of performing in the show takes place.

If, for any reason, a participant would not be performing the act in which they were enrolled, the Circus staff would work with that participant to see whether he or she could still perform elsewhere in the show (unless discipline or lack of attendance is the issue).

Some acts, due to limited rigging space or equipment, might require participants to rotate shows. This means that the participant would not perform in every show, but rather take turns with another performer either by switching nights or positions, in order to allow more people the opportunity to take part in the circus experience. Paying class fees does not guarantee a performing spot in show. Performing must be earned by means of consistent attendance, positive attitude and demonstration of required strengths and skills in classes.

## **EVALUATION PERIODS DURING THE CIRCUS SEASON**

There are 2 formal evaluation periods within each circus class: Conditioning (or strength) Evaluations and Skills Evaluations. The participants are evaluated during this time to ensure they are able to perform all of the skills required, as well as to measure their strength and endurance in order to progress safely.

### **Conditioning: September 2<sup>nd</sup> through October 19<sup>th</sup> (7 weeks)**

Conditioning Evaluations occur the week of October 20<sup>th</sup>. Conditioning is an ongoing process, and we strongly encourage Circus participants to work out at home in addition to their workouts in class. For example, the upper body strength needed for most acts can take a long time to build, especially if a student has no previous circus or gymnastics experience.

### **Skill Development: October 27<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup> (6 weeks)**

During this time, participants will learn the skills or tricks they will need to know for the performance. Skill Evaluation occurs the week of December 8<sup>th</sup> with the evaluation results being communicated to the parents before winter break.

If for any reason, a participant does not successfully achieve the goals of the Conditioning or Skills Evaluations, Circus staff will work with that participant & parent to find an alternate class in which he or she can continue learning safely, based on the student’s level of strength, experience and skill.

## **HOLIDAYS – NO CIRCUS CLASSES ON:**

- Thanksgiving Break: November 24–30<sup>th</sup> (No Classes)
- YMCA Annual Boutique: December 4–7<sup>th</sup> (NO Classes – Gym Closed)
- Winter Break: December 21 – January 3<sup>rd</sup> (Classes Resume on Sunday, January 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Spring Break: March 16 – March 20<sup>th</sup> (NO Classes – Gym Closed)

This Circus season runs from September through May. If a holiday is not listed above, that means the YMCA facility remains open on that date and classes will be held as scheduled. Please make your best efforts to bring your children to their classes on holidays that the YMCA does not observe, as the Trainer will be prepared to hold class as scheduled.

## **EXCUSED & UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

Participants must maintain regular attendance in classes. However, we realize that a missed class occurs once in a while. An excused absence would be the result of an event of serious, unavoidable nature. An unexcused absence would be events or activities that take place resulting as a conflict with a participant's Circus class. Each absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Circus Director. Should a participant fall behind in a class due to absences, the Trainer and Circus Director will notify a parent in an attempt to rectify the situation prior to it resulting in removing the participant from the class. Please notify us when your child is unable to attend their classes by calling the circus office at (909) 798-9622 x7117 or emailing the Circus Director. We will communicate the information to the Circus Trainer(s).

## **\*\*PROGRAM & ACT SUPPORT\*\***

The Circus program is largely dependent on volunteers, and parent support is necessary! Many of our parents already provide support by helping the Trainers with taking attendance or with spotting in classes and we appreciate this immensely. If you are not currently involved please let the Circus Director know where you would like to help throughout the year.

We also need a significant number of volunteers for the performance season. So you can gauge your time, we ask everyone to volunteer at least 4 hours during show season. Below are a number of options:

### **Get Involved with your Children – Full Season Positions: November through May**

Spotters/Act Support: Are needed all season to help ensure the safety of the performers, especially aerialists, by standing beneath them and observing the contact points between the performers and the equipment. (We will teach you how to spot!)

### **Pre-Show Positions: These positions are needed from January through April:**

Costumes: Are prepared throughout the year and organized during show time. We always need help sewing and designing costumes, and managing the dressing trailers during show. Please note: you do not need to sew in order to help with costumes.

Show Promotion: Volunteers will go out into the community to spread show material to local business. Help get the audience in our seats.

### **Show-Time Positions: Positions needed from mid-April through May:**

Ticket Sales: Begins in March. Help sell tickets a couple nights a week while your kids rehearse.

Parent Patrol: Keep an eye on performers as they wait to perform during rehearsals/shows.

Rousts: Help during run-throughs, rehearsals and shows by setting the equipment for each act.

Ushers: Direct audience members to their seats during show time.

Concessions: Help run the concession stand by preparing/retrieving refreshments as they are ordered.

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## CLASS POLICIES

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("Participants" includes performers, trainers, assistant trainers & facilitators)

1. Any participant under the age of 15 must have a parent/guardian in the facility at all times.
2. Participants must be appropriately dressed for all classes. (Please see Appropriate Attire section below)
3. Participants must arrive for classes on time. Arriving 15 minutes or more late to a class will be considered when appointing performance spots and rotations.
4. Participants should not be on any of the equipment outside of class time, or without a trainer or spotter present during class.
5. Participants should not be eating, drinking or chewing gum during classes or in class areas.
6. Participants are invited to eat their snacks and/or meals in the seating area in the front lobby. But there is no food or drinks allowed in the Coble Gym or Woody Center – other than water!
7. No horseplay allowed in classes or on any equipment (including the mat cart and roll-up mats).
8. No running between classes in the lobby or in the hallways.
9. Only YMCA Staff, Equipment Managers, Head Trainers and Assistant Trainers are allowed in the Equipment Room (AKA The Hole)
10. Participants must show respect for their Trainers and classmates, be responsible in assisting their Trainers in setting up and/or tearing down their equipment.
11. Participants must maintain regular attendance of classes. Participants may not miss more than 2 classes per month or they risk being removed from that act. Missed classes should be reported to respective trainer(s) prior to missing class, whenever possible. However, reporting an absence before it occurs does *not* guarantee that it will be regarded as an excused absence.
12. Participants must demonstrate positive attitude, motivate and encourage others, and a willingness to do their best in every class every time. Participants will be evaluated on this behavior; the core values of the YMCA: Caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
13. Conflicts between participants will be taken seriously. If a conflict should arise, please bring the concern to the attention of the Circus Director right away. We will respect each participant's right to privacy, so conflicts will be treated seriously and will not be talked about with unrelated parties, unless those parties are direct witnesses to the incident.
14. Participants are expected to keep personal items "out of sight" during classes. These items cause distraction in classes, and could also be easily misplaced.
15. Participants must maintain regular class payments. All fees are expected to be paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Anyone unable to continue with making payments will be removed from classes. Remember, the YMCA offers financial assistance. (Please see Financial Assistance section above)

### **APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR CIRCUS CLASSES – DRESS CODE**

Participants must wear comfortable, athletic-type, "snug fitting" but flexible clothes in order to participate in classes. Examples: spandex shorts, fitted t-shirts, leotards, leggings, bicycle shorts, unitards, mat shoes or tennis shoes. Please do not wear jeans or loosely fitted clothing. NO JEWELRY should be worn by participants. Participants in Unicycle and Teeterboard must wear tennis shoes.

During Show: Long hair must be pulled back in a tight bun, ponytail, or braids. Nets are to be free of any holes and shall not show any dirt on the bottom of the feet. Specific act dress code may vary. Please talk to your Head Trainer for specifics for your act.

## **REHEARSAL, RUN-THROUGH'S AND SHOW ATTENDANCE**

It is extremely important for all participants, performers, and spotters to attend all run-throughs, rehearsals and shows. Please make sure your child arrives on time! We plan on starting the run-throughs and rehearsals on time, so it's important that everyone is warmed up and ready to go when needed.

Notes and other important information will also be given prior to rehearsals and shows, so it's crucial that all participants are present for these pre-rehearsal/pre-show meetings designated as call times. If even one person is late, it can affect the whole group, so please be respectful of everyone's time!

### **RUN-THRUS & REHEARSALS**

First Half only run-throughs will be held on Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup> and Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

Second Half only run-throughs will be held on Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

Full Show (Both Halves) run-throughs will be held April 14, 16, 21 and 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5pm.

Refer to the act order to see which half your act(s) is in. It is imperative that all participants arrive at the designated call time regardless of where their acts fall in the show order. Transitions are not generally set into the act order until later in April.

All classes are not held at their regular times in April. However, it's possible that your child's Head Trainer may call an additional act practice that might take place directly before a run-through or on a Monday, Wednesday or Sunday. You will be notified in advance of this practice.

Run-throughs do tend to be lengthy, so the sooner we get started, the sooner we finish. Participants are free to leave a run-through after their last act has finished. Please be prepared by bringing snacks, water, homework/and or quiet toys to help keep kids occupied during these evenings.

There are two formal dress rehearsals for all performers: Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> with call time at 5:00pm. Opening night for this year's performing season is Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Run-Thru & Rehearsal Absences**

Absences are only excused if the participant has extenuating circumstances. We understand that sometimes a family emergency, religious observance or some other unforeseen circumstance will prevent a participant from attending a run-through or rehearsal, but please be reminded that in our "ensemble" or group acts, one performer being absent can affect the entire group's ability to perform their routine. Please notify the Circus Office of any possible absences before run-throughs begin in April so that we can plan ahead to accommodate for the absence.

# CIRCUS CALENDAR

## APRIL 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<i>March 31</i>	1	2	3	4
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half Run Through 5pm call-time		2 <sup>nd</sup> Half Run Through 5pm call-time		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		1 <sup>st</sup> Half Run Through 5pm call-time		2 <sup>nd</sup> Half Run Through 5pm call-time		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Full Show Run Through 5pm call-time		Full Show Run Through 5pm call-time		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		Full Show Run Through 5pm call-time		Full Show Run Through 5pm call-time		
26	27	28	29	30		
			Full Show Dress Rehearsal 5pm call	Full Show Dress Rehearsal 5pm call		

Please arrive at CALL-TIME for all run-throughs and rehearsals.  
Please bring a snack or meal for your children during extended practices.  
Please contact the Circus office with any questions that you may have.  
(909) 798-9622 x 7117

# CIRCUS CALENDAR

## MAY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Opening Night 5pm Call 7pm Show	2 3pm Call 5pm Show
3 1pm Call 3pm Show	4	5 Act Pictures 5pm call	6 Act Pictures 5pm call	7	8	9 3:30pm Call 5pm Show *Alumni Night*
10 1:30pm Call 3pm Show  *Mother's Day*	11	12	13	14	15 6pm Call 7pm Show	16 4pm Call 5pm Show
17 2pm Call 3pm Show  *7pm Awards Ceremony*	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Cast Party  *Memorial Day*	26	27	28	29	30

Every Show is considered mandatory.  
Missing a show may result in removal from following shows.  
Please contact the Circus office with any questions that you may have.  
(909) 798-9622 x 7117