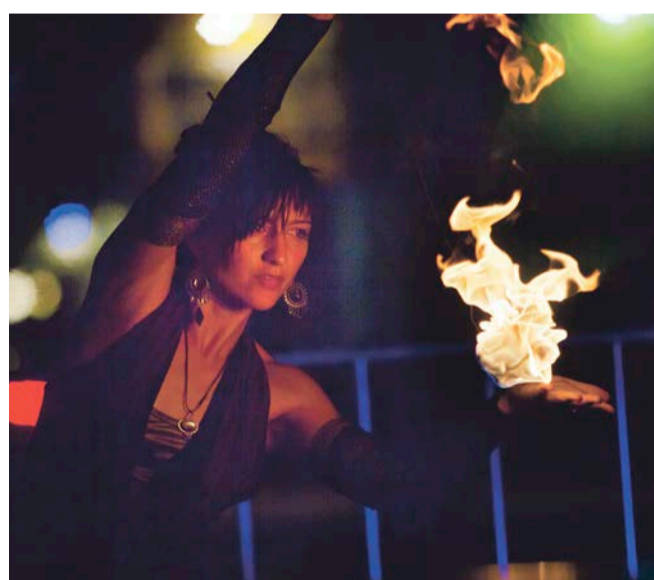




SAIYNA BASHIR/NYT INSTITUTE

Zoë Rae, shown performing with fiery hula hoops at the Sky Bar in Tucson, is a co-owner and creative director of Cirque Roots, a Tucson-based troupe that does not work with animals.



Proposal to Ban Circus's Furry Acts

By SANDRA LÓPEZ-MONSALVE

The circus is coming to town. In fact, year after year, many circuses have kept Tucson on their schedules, bringing in aerialists, jugglers, clowns and acts that feature the crown jewels of the big top: exotic animals.

But now, along with the cheers of parents and children come the concerns of those who feel that those beautiful animals are more than just a vaunted tradition of show business. They are seen as an endangered and mistreated class of captive creatures who are at risk because of how they are housed, trained and transported.

A local organization, Supporting and Promoting Ethics for the Animal Kingdom, known as Speak, has spent more than two decades advocating for animal rights and recently decided to zero in on circuses visiting the Tucson area that use exotic animals.

Last month, Speak initiated a petition to ban wild and exotic animal acts in circuses in the city of Tucson. Its proposal is one of many around the world. Mexico in December banned exotic animals in performances, and Los Angeles and Oakland, Calif., have put legislation

in place to ban the use of bullhooks, a tool resembling a short spear that is used on sensitive areas to make elephants perform.

When Mexico introduced its ban, the government gave the circuses a few months to stop using the animals in their acts; today hundreds of animals are homeless, unemployed or at risk because they are expensive to care for.

Every year, circuses like Carson and Barnes, Jordan World Circus and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey bring all kinds of animals to town, and every year, Speak protests in front of their tents, bullhorn in tow. "I don't know if any of these circuses could go anywhere anymore without protests happening around," said Gary Vella, the chapter coordinator of the organization.

Many of these circuses violate the Animal Welfare Act, Mr. Vella said, and he cited improper veterinary care, inadequate housing and transportation as infractions. On the Animal Care section of the Ringling Bros. website, the company emphasizes social interactions among elephants and positive relationships with trainers and handlers.

"The bullhook, or the guide, is

Continued on Page 11

Musician Uses Connections and Social Media to Search for Lost Dog

By YESSÉNIA FUNES

Charles, a cream-colored poodle terrier mix, was missing. That, on its own, was not particularly noteworthy.

But Charles, known to his human friends as Charlie, had connections. His owner, Courtney Robbins, is a Tucson musician who was on tour in New York when her dog was lost. And Ms. Robbins has a network.

News of Charlie's disappearance on Sunday, May 17, spread quickly online. Christabelle Merrill, who had been dog-sitting, posted signs throughout Tucson's hipster community on Fourth Avenue and put a notice on Craigslist. After Ms. Robbins made a Facebook post, her friends shared. Tucson Weekly mentioned Charlie's disappearance.

By the following Thursday, Charlie had gone national: Kate Nocera, a BuzzFeed News senior congressional reporter and a friend of Ms. Robbins's, shared word about Charlie via Twitter.

"There's not much I can do from D.C., but I obviously want to help, and I have a lot more Twitter followers than she does," Ms. Nocera said, "so I put it out there in the hopes that someone will see it."

Ms. Nocera has a point: About 17,000 people follow her on Twitter; 137 people follow Ms. Robbins. Ms. Nocera's tweet about Charlie has been retweeted 25 times. Some retweeters were journalists; others were Tucson natives.



Charlie disappeared on May 17 around 6 p.m. A gate was left open, and adventurous Charlie decided to explore. He wandered around Fourth Avenue, where visitors will find tattoo parlors and an abundance of smoke shops.

Joy Soler, who owns a local coffee shop, Revolutionary Grounds, was among those who shared the Facebook post on Revolutionary Grounds' Facebook page. She said that Fourth Avenue is a tight-knit community and that people there tend to look out for one another.

As for Ms. Nocera, she said she did not think much about her tweet. After all, she spends most of her workday on Twitter. "It's second nature to tweet something out," she said.

This was not the first time that Ms. Nocera used Twitter for assistance, and

the requests are not always so altruistic. While covering the Ted Cruz filibuster in 2013, she recalled, she needed some coffee. It was 6 a.m., when Ms. Nocera could not leave Capitol Hill, and no coffee shops were open there anyway. So she asked her Twitter followers to bring her coffee — and it worked.

A follower was passing a Starbucks on his way to work and also passing her area, so he obliged her request.

With 74 percent of online adults using social networking sites, it should come as little surprise that someone brought Ms. Nocera her coffee. Plus, the Pew Research Center found in 2010 that "Internet users get more support from their social ties, and Facebook users get the most support."

That rings true for Ms. Robbins. Charlie had not been found as of May 28, but the support has been "overwhelming," she said. A Facebook page dedicated to lost dogs has also shared her post.

Ms. Robbins, reached by telephone in New York, said that her friends were still pursuing some leads. The most promising lead centered on the last sighting of Charlie on the day he disappeared: A skateboarder had brought the dog into Sacred Art Tattoo Studio, on Fourth Avenue, and asked whether anyone knew who owned him.

"I just want to see my dog again," Ms. Robbins said.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY YESSÉNIA FUNES/NYT INSTITUTE

After a gate was left open, Charlie, a poodle terrier mix, was last seen around Fourth Avenue, an area known for its many tattoo parlors.