

NEWS
For Immediate Release

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**The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee
Stands Ready to Rescue 6 Ailing Circus Elephants including Lota**

Hohenwald, TN--(June 23) Lota, a circus elephant that has been the focus of three lawsuits, the inspiration for an international petition for her release and responsible for raising awareness of the plight of captive elephants, will finally be released to the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee.

Earlier this year a lawsuit was brought by the United States Department of Agriculture against the Illinois-based Hawthorn Corporation, the company that owns LOTA. In the suit, the Hawthorn Corporation, a company which trains and rents elephants for circuses, was charged with numerous counts of cruelty and neglect of its 16 circus elephants. As a result, John Cuneo, owner of the Hawthorn Corporation, agreed to relinquish his 16 elephants by

August 15th to facilities approved by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The USDA has asked The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee to accept six of the Hawthorn 16. The Sanctuary has immediate barn space for two, Lota and Misty; both suffer from tuberculosis and require special facilities separate from other elephants for the duration of their six month treatments. Additionally, the Sanctuary has secured temporary housing for four more Hawthorn elephants while they undergo testing to insure that they are disease free. However, providing permanent sanctuary for these six elephants is costly. A new barn must be built with a price tag of one million dollars. The Sanctuary has approached animal welfare organizations, private foundations and individuals and has raised \$643,000 to date.

Although the Sanctuary would like to rescue all 16 Hawthorn elephants, this is only possible if additional housing can be secured and monies raised beyond the one million dollars that the Sanctuary needs to provide permanent refuge for the first six elephants.

Some of the Hawthorn elephants have lived together for decades. Most are aged and in poor health. Separating them from one another could inflict extreme emotional trauma. Additionally, this herd represents a wealth of information regarding the life threatening diseases that plague captive elephants. The Sanctuary's wish is to establish a world class health and welfare program that would keep these 16 elephants together and through non-invasive research, benefit many captive elephants around the world.

The Elephant Sanctuary in Hohenwald, Tennessee, is the nation's only natural-habitat refuge developed specifically to meet the needs of endangered elephants. It is a non-profit organization, licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, designed specifically for old, sick or needy elephants who have been retired from zoos and circuses. Utilizing more than 2700 acres, it provides two separate and protected, natural habitat environments for Asian and African elephants. To learn more about the Sanctuary or to make a donation to help rescue Lota and the Hawthorn elephants please visit their web site at www.elephants.com or call 931-796-6500 ext. 26

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