



FOR RELEASE JANUARY 15, 2012 #

Sword Swallowers Association International

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President Proclaims Sword Swallower's Day

Sword Swallowers celebrate by swallowing together at Ripley's Believe It or Not locations worldwide!

MUNCIE, IN (SSAI) – On February 25th, Sword Swallowers around the world will celebrate World Sword Swallower's Day by doing what they do best -- Swallowing swords!

Sword Swallowers Association International (SSAI) President Dan Meyer announced the 6th annual World Sword Swallower's Day to raise awareness of sword swallowers around the world. Founded by SSAI and co-sponsored by Ripley's Believe It or Not, World Sword Swallower's Day is set for February 25th in conjunction with February as National Swallowing Disorders Month.



In celebration of World Sword Swallower's Day, more than 30 sword swallowers are expected to "drop swords" at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums worldwide on Saturday, February 25th at 2:25 pm.

"We sword swallowers have been risking our lives to perform sword swallowing for over 4000 years," explains Meyer. "But many people either don't believe it's real, or they think the art has died out."

"We established World Sword Swallower's Day to promote this ancient art still carried on by a few dozen surviving performers -- to raise awareness of the medical contributions sword swallowers have made in the fields of medicine and science, to honor veteran performers, and to raise funds for esophageal cancer research and the Injured Sword Swallower's Relief Fund." Meyer explains. "Most of all, we do it to correct myths and educate the public and medical professionals by doing demonstrations for the public and media around the world."

"Many of us have been performing for years, and we love our work," explains Meyer, a multiple Ripley's Believe It or Not who performs in 20 countries around the world. "World Sword Swallower's Day is a great opportunity for us to show the public what we really do!"

"Most people don't realize the contributions sword swallowers have made in the fields of science and medicine over the past 150 years." Meyer explains. In 1868, a sword swallower was used by Dr. Adolf Kussmaul in Freiburg Germany to develop the first rigid endoscopy. In 1906 a sword swallower underwent the first esophageal electrocardiogram in Wales. Other sword swallowers have been prodded and examined by doctors and medical institutes without recognition over the past 150 years. "We want to change all that. That's why we're celebrating World Sword Swallower's Day." Meyer explains.

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In 2006, the British Medical Journal published the first international medical study of the art entitled "Sword Swallowing and its side effects". Co-authored by Meyer and Dr. Brian Witcombe, the two-year research study was historic in being the first serious medical research in the 4000 year history of sword swallowing. The study won its authors the 2007 Ig Nobel Prize in Medicine at Harvard University.

Since some sword swallows perform charitable work for the medical community to raise awareness of esophageal cancer, dysphagia, GERD, and other upper gastro-intestinal and swallowing disorders, SSAI encourages sword swallows to put on demonstrations at medical facilities throughout the day. Sword swallows will also perform at hospitals, nursing homes and orphanages for those who would otherwise have difficulty getting to theaters to see live performances.

"The sword swallows who participate in these activities find them rewarding," explains Meyer. "Many people who have never had the opportunity to see sword swallowing will finally have a chance to witness it firsthand."

Why is Ripley co-sponsoring World Sword Swallower's Day? "Because it's great entertainment!" said Tim O'Brien, VP of Communications for Ripley Entertainment Inc. "Sword swallows and Ripley go way back to the very first Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium set up at the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. There, three performers, two of whom were ladies, mesmerized the huge crowds. Ripley's has been home to sword swallows around the world ever since."

On February 25th sword swallows will perform around the world at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums in London, New York City, Hollywood, San Francisco, Orlando, Key West, and St. Augustine, FL, Branson, MO, Dallas, TX, Gatlinburg, TN, and Niagara Falls, Canada. "Most of us usually perform solo," Meyer says. "World Sword Swallower's Day gives us a chance to work together to be part of something bigger."

"It's a huge honor for us to carry on the tradition of sword swallows who have performed at Ripley's Believe It or Not! museums over the years." Meyer explains. "In light of this, SSAI is extending an open invitation to sword swallows around the world to join us in celebrating by swallowing swords at Ripley's Believe It or Not museums on February 25th." Performances are scheduled to take place on 2/25/12 at 2:25:12 pm local time.

About Sword Swallowing

The art of sword swallowing began more than 4000 years ago in India, and requires the practitioner to use mind-over-matter techniques to control the body and repress natural reflexes to insert solid steel blades from 15 to 25 inches down the esophagus into the stomach. With the demise of the circus sideshow over the past 50 years, there are less than a few dozen full-time professional sword swallows actively performing around the world today.

About the Sword Swallowers Association International

The [Sword Swallowers Association International](http://www.swordswallow.com), founded in 2001 to preserve the art of sword swallowing, is made up of sword swallows around the world, and maintains a website with general information on sword swallowing for the public at www.swordswallow.com.

About Ripley Entertainment

Ripley's Believe It or Not! is part of the Ripley Entertainment Inc. family of worldwide attractions, the global leader in location-based entertainment. More than 12 million people visit its 85-plus attractions in 11 countries each year. In addition to its 31 Believe It or Not! Odditoriums, the Orlando-based company has publishing, licensing and broadcast divisions that oversee the syndicated Believe It or Not! television show, best-selling books, and the popular syndicated cartoon strip, Ripley's Believe It or Not!, that runs daily in 42 countries. Ripley

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Entertainment is a Jim Pattison Company, the third-largest privately held company in Canada.

LOCAL SWORD SWALLOWERS AVAILABLE for interviews, comments, and medical demonstrations. For more information on [World Sword Swallower's Day](#), or to schedule a sword swallower for events on February 25th in your area, please [contact us](#).

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