

President Proclaims Sword Swallower's Day 2013

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

MUNCIE, IN (SSAI) – On February 23, 2013, Sword Swallowers around the world will celebrate World Sword Swallower's Day 2013 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 worldwide. Founded by SSAI and co-sponsored by Ripley Entertainment, World Sword Swallower's Day 2013 will be observed on February 23rd, 2013 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 23rd at 2:23 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 free demonstrations on this day 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 to the fields of science and medicine over the past 150 years." Meyer explains. In 1868, a sword swallower was enlisted by Dr. Adolf Kussmaul in Freiburg Germany to develop the first rigid endoscope. In 1906 a sword swallower underwent the first esophageal electrocardiogram in Wales.



Other sword swallows have been prodded and examined by doctors and medical institutes over the past 150 years without recognition.

"We want to change all that. That's why we celebrate World Sword Swallower's Day." Meyer explains.

In 2006, the first comprehensive medical study on sword swallowing, "[Sword Swallowing and its side effects](#)", was published in the British Medical Journal. Co-authored by Meyer and British radiologist Dr. Brian Witcombe, the two-year study was historic as the first comprehensive medical research conducted on sword swallows in the 4000 year history of the art. The research 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, dysphasia, GERD, and other upper gastrointestinal 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.

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

"Because sword swallowing is so rare, sword swallows usually perform solo," Meyer says. "World Sword Swallower's Day gives us a chance to work together to be part of something bigger."

Why is Ripley's co-sponsoring World Sword Swallower's Day? "Because it's great entertainment!" said Tim O'Brien, VP of Communications for Ripley Entertainment. "Sword swallows and Ripley's 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."

"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 worldwide to join us in celebrating World Sword Swallower's Day by swallowing swords with us at Ripley's Believe It or Not Odditoriums around the world."

On February 23rd, sword swallows will perform free live shows at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums in London, New York Times Square, Atlantic City, NJ, Baltimore, MD, Myrtle Beach, SC, Gatlinburg, TN, Orlando, St. Augustine, Panama City, and Key West, FL, Branson, MO, Grand Prairie, TX, Hollywood and San Francisco CA, Newport, OR, Genting Hills Malaysia, and Niagara Falls, Canada.

The 2013 Big Swallow will take place on Saturday, 2/23/13 at 2:23:13 pm local time.

About Sword Swallowing

The art of sword swallowing originated over 4000 years ago in India, and requires the practitioner to use mind-over-matter techniques to repress natural reflexes in order to insert solid steel blades from 15 to 25 inches down the esophagus and into the stomach. There are currently 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) is an international organization comprised of sword swallows from around the world who are dedicated to preserving and promoting the ancient art of sword swallowing. **SSAI** maintains a site with general information on sword swallowing at www.swordswallow.com.

About Ripley Entertainment

Ripley's Believe It or Not! (www.ripleys.com) 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 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 an event in your area on February 23rd, [contact us](#).

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Media Contact:

Dan Meyer

President

Sword Swallowers Association Int'l

(615) 969-2568

Halfdan@aol.com

www.swordswallow.org (SSAI)

www.swordswallow.com (General Info)

www.swordswallow.org/wssd/ (World Sword Swallower's Day)

Tim O'Brien

VP Communications

Ripley Entertainment Inc.

(615) 646-7465

obrien@ripleys.com

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