President Proclaims Sword Swallower's Day 2016

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

SSAI, Tampa, FL – The Sword Swallowers Association International reports that there are less than a few dozen full-time professional sword swallowers actively performing around the world today. On **World Sword Swallower's Day, Saturday, February 27, 2016**, the world will have the rare opportunity to witness them defy death and do what they do best -- doing the impossible and swallowing swords -- all at once!

Sword Swallowers Association International (SSAI) President Dan Meyer announced the 9th 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 2016 will be celebrated on February 28th at 2:27 pm in conjunction with February as National Swallowing Disorders Month.

“In 2015, we had 45 sword swallowers swallow 89 swords at 13 Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums around the US. This year we expect a record turnout of over 50 sword swallowers doing unbelievable stunts and setting record numbers by swallowing over 100 swords at 19 Ripley's museums around the world!” Meyer said.

"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."

"I established World Sword Swallower's Day in 2007 to promote this ancient art still carried on by a few dozen surviving performers -- to celebrate the courageous and daring performers who risk their lives to entertain audiences, to honor veteran performers, to raise awareness of the medical contributions sword swallowers have made in the fields of medicine and science, 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 community 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 39-time world record holding sword swallower who performs at Ripley's Believe It or Not museums and speaks in 35 countries around the world. For World Sword Swallower's Day 2013, Meyer **swallowed a 23 inch sword and used it to pull a 3700 lb car out of Ripley’s Believe It or Not Baltimore**. "World Sword Swallower's Day is a great chance for us to show the world what we really do and how we do it!"

"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.
Sword swallowers have been prodded and examined by doctors and scientists in the name of science for the past 150 years, often 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 swallowers 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 swallowers perform charitable work for the medical community to raise awareness of esophageal cancer, dysphasia, GERD, and other upper gastrointestinal and swallowing disorders, SSAI encourages its members to perform demonstrations at hospitals and medical centers throughout the day. Sword swallowers also perform at nursing homes, orphanages and Ripley's museums for those who might not be able to get to theaters to see live performances.

"Sword swallowers who participate in these activities find it 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 swallowers 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, former VP of Communications for Ripley Entertainment. "Sword swallowers 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 swallowers around the world ever since."

"It's a huge honor for us to carry on the tradition of sword swallowers who have performed at Ripley's museums over the past 83 years." Meyer explains.

"As a result, SSAI is extending an open invitation to all sword swallowers worldwide to join us in celebrating World Sword Swallower's Day by swallowing swords with us at 2:27 pm at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums around the world."

World Sword Swallower's Day 2016 takes place Saturday, February 27, 2016 at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditoriums, where sword swallowers will perform free live shows and demonstrations from 1:30 to 2:15 pm. The event will culminate in the simultaneous Big Swallow at 2:27:16 pm to coincide with the date. To participate, sword swallowers must register for their local Ripley's Believe It or Not! Odditorium at: www.ripleys.com/sword-swallowers-day
Participating Ripley’s Locations

- Ripley’s Atlantic City NJ
- Ripley’s Baltimore Inner Harbor, MD
- Ripley’s Branson, MO
- Ripley’s Copenhagen Denmark
- Ripley’s Gatlinburg, TN
- Ripley’s Genting Highlands, Malaysia
- Ripley’s Dallas Grand Prairie, TX
- Ripley’s Hollywood, CA
- Ripley’s Key West, FL
- Ripley’s Myrtle Beach, SC
- Ripley’s New York Times Square, NY
- Ripley’s Orlando, FL
- Ripley’s Panama City Beach, FL
- Ripley’s Fisherman’s Wharf San Francisco, CA
- Ripley’s St. Augustine, FL
- Ripley’s Surfer’s Paradise, Australia
- Ripley’s Williamsburg, VA
- Ripley’s Wisconsin Dells, WI

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 swallowers actively performing around the world today.

About Sword Swallowers Association International
The Sword Swallowers Association International, based in Tampa FL, is an international organization comprised of sword swallowers around the world who are dedicated to preserving and promoting the ancient art of sword swallowing. SSAI’s site with general information on sword swallowing is www.swordswallow.com.

About Ripley Entertainment
Ripley’s Believe It or Not! (www.ripleys.com) is part of the Ripley Entertainment family of attractions, the global leader in location-based entertainment. In addition to its 32 Believe It or Not! Odditoriums, the Orlando-based company has publishing, licensing and broadcast divisions that oversee the syndicated Believe It or Not! TV show, books, and popular syndicated cartoon strip that runs daily in 42 countries.

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 the week before February 27th, contact us.

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