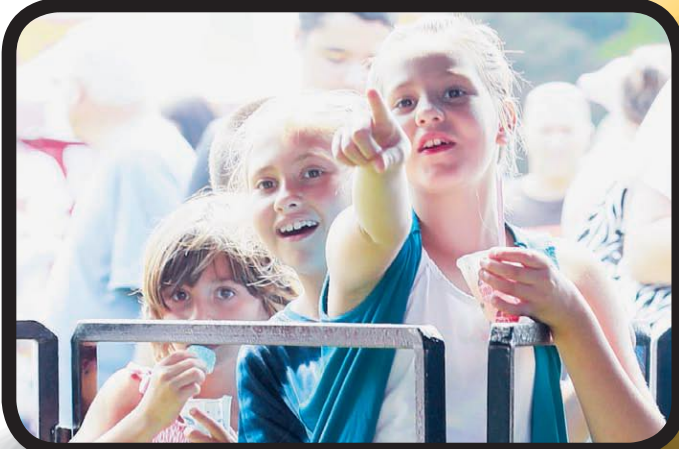




Joy, curiosity, smiles, and awe

A new feature rises on the Kelleys Island landscape: The Kelly Miller Circus tent.

BLADE PHOTOS BY JEREMY WADSWORTH



Front to back: Morgan Stacy, 9, of Put-in-Bay points out the tigers to her friends Carin Kirsch, 9, and Tianna Sexton, 9.



A trainer and tiger perform their act.



Workers begin setting up the circus tent.



People gather to watch the circus set up. They include, in front from left, Karen Teal (pointing), Audrey Swigart, Abbey Swigart, Amber Swigart, Nick Swigart, and Jen Swigart, all from Wooster, Ohio.

*A ragged suitcase in his hand,
he steals silently away from the
circus grounds
And the highway's haunted by
the carnival sounds
They dance like a great grease-
paint ghost on the wind
A man in baggy pants, a lonely
face, a crazy grin
Runnin' home to some small
Ohio town
— Bruce Springsteen, "Wild
Billy's Circus Story"*

By ROD LOCKWOOD
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Fire eaters walk the earth.
Elephants lift tents into the sky,
acrobats contort themselves in
rebellion against the inexorable
push of gravity, and clowns clown
around when the circus comes to
town.
The Kelly Miller Circus, which
has its roots in the famous Ring-
ling Bros. franchise, rolls into
small towns all over the country
from February to October, bring-
ing with it a whiff of exotica along
with more earthy sensations. The
mythology of the circus — per-
petual life on the road, an air of
danger and rebellion, and a sense
of living outside proper society's
boundaries — has long appealed
to artists and townsfolk alike.
You can see it on the smiling
faces of the crowds who sold out
the circus's performances on Kel-
leys Island last week. There is joy,
curiosity, and more than a little bit
of awe while staring at tigers and
watching dog and pony shows.
Kids beam while they sit on a
camel's back and squeal in delight
when one of the clowns pulls off a
goofy stunt.
It's a form of entertainment
that's a long way from Imax the-
aters and computer games, one
where wonderment is far more
organic and human. And when
it's over the sleep-deprived circus
workers and achy-muscle acro-
bats pack up and move on to more
small American towns and more
smiling faces.

Contact Rod Lockwood at:
or rlockwood@theblade.com
or 419-724-6159



Circus-goers line up for tickets.



An elephant and a fan at the Kelly Miller Circus.



Success is in the faces of spectators.



From left, Debbie Fisher of Copley, Ohio, snaps a shot of her niece, Megan Ray, 10, and her daughters, Sophia Fisher, 10, and Elizabeth Fisher, 4, atop a camel before the show starts.