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**16-YEAR-OLD LOS ANGELES STUDENT EXPOSES ELEPHANT ABUSE
BEHIND THE SCENES AT CIRCUSES AND ZOOS EVERYWHERE**

***Juliette West Streams 24 hours of Elephant Videos for L.A.'s 1st Annual Elephant Awareness Day
Friday, August 3rd to Spread Awareness about the Cruelty Behind Elephant Entertainment***

Los Angeles, CA – July 31, 2012 – Teen animal advocate Juliette West, 16, will contribute to the city's 1st annual Elephant Awareness Day on Friday, August 3rd by streaming 24 hours of elephant videos on her website JulietteSpeaks.org. The videos, compiled from friends and experts of elephants around the world, show the hidden suffering of elephants in circuses and zoos, elephants working in logging or tourism, and the truth behind the ivory trade.

According to West, who is a frequent public speaker on the topic, virtually all elephants in circuses, zoos, parades, and films suffer ongoing abuse throughout their lives. Most were forcibly removed from their parents at 3 years of age, put into 'crush boxes,' and beaten daily into submission only to live a life of confinement and further violence. Zookeepers claim that the ongoing dominance treatment is necessary, as elephants can never be truly domesticated. West states, "Elephants are wild animals, and they simply can never be fully domesticated. However intelligent and emotional they may be, the only way to get them to perform tricks or even act tamely around people is by abusing them."

Currently, there are 15,000 – 20,000 elephants in captivity worldwide. "You enjoy a 45-second look at the zoo, a 10-minute ride on his back, or a half hour show at the circus, yet for this the elephant suffers a lifetime of imprisonment, abuse, and intimidation." Common mistreatment of elephants includes the use of bullhooks, electrical hotshots, crush boxes, chains, daily intimidation, drugging and lifelong imprisonment. "The bullhook is designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to inflict pain and punishment," West said.

West hopes to put a stop to this by shedding light on the abuse and encouraging youth and their parents to spend their money on entertainment that does not harm animals.

On Friday, August 3rd, in honor of the 1st annual Elephant Awareness Day, Juliette West and friends at PETA, In Defense of Animals, and Animal Defenders International have organized several events. Their hope is to bring awareness to the plight of elephants in captivity, and motivate individuals worldwide to take a stand against elephant injustice.

“People wonder what there is to be ‘aware’ of regarding elephants. But then they are shocked to find out that there is a lot to learn about how they are inhumanely treated, and how going to zoos and circuses helps to support the abuse of elephants. I hope and intend that Elephant Awareness Day will be part of the solution in helping to better the lives of captive elephants worldwide,” West said.

The City of Los Angeles put itself on the map on June 19, when it became the first U.S. city to create an Elephant Awareness Day. The resolution, presented by long-time elephant advocate Councilman Tony Cardenas, was passed unanimously. The council also simultaneously passed a commemorative resolution honoring Juliette West for her elephant advocacy work.

West, an advocate for elephants since the age of 13 has a message for everyone, particularly youth, “You are more powerful than you think!” At age 14, West starred in and produced the film “How I Became An Elephant,” directed by Tim Gorski, which follows her from her home in Los Angeles to Thailand, where she meets the famed “Elephant Lady” Lek Chailert. Together, they purchase an exhausted and injured working elephant named Ratreer from her abusive “mahout” and bring her to the Elephant Nature Sanctuary in Chiang Mai.

At age 15, she created JulietteSpeaks.org as a base for her awareness projects. At age 16, she helped attorney David Casselman, Esq. in the high-profile campaign to free the elephants living at the L.A. Zoo. This campaign recently received a boost with a court ruling that outlaws the use of bullhooks and electric prods and requires the L.A. Zoo to exercise its elephants for at least two hours per day.

In just a few short years, the teen-aged West has reached over 100,000 people with her message of just and humane treatment for elephants, and her budding non-profit has received offers from multiple sanctuaries to take in any elephant she rescues. She has given numerous speeches at schools reaching thousands of youth, has been interviewed in 36 print, radio, and television stories, and has been featured in over 130 articles and blogs. She hopes that her efforts will lead others to stop supporting circuses, zoos, films, and other entertainment that continues the cycle of abuse. West also advocates for the release of elephants from zoos and circuses for retirement at sanctuaries.

EVENTS FOR ELEPHANT AWARENESS DAY – AUGUST 3

- **Elephant Video Marathon** – 24 hours of elephant videos, streamed on JulietteSpeaks.org (Aug 3-4)
- **Special Movie Preview** - \$5.00 for 48 hours of online access to the full movie, How I Became an Elephant. (Aug 3-4)
- **Rally and Public Comment at L.A. City Council Meeting.** Friday, Aug. 3.
Time: Rally at 9:00a.m. and City Council meeting at 10:00 a.m. Van Nuys City Hall, 14410 Sylvan St., Van Nuys 91401 (meet on the sidewalk on Sylvan Street in front of City Hall).
- **Outreach and leafleting at the L.A. Zoo.** Sat. Aug. 4, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
L.A. Zoo, 5333 Zoo Drive, L.A. 90027 (meet in front of main entrance)

For More Information Visit:

ElephantAwarenessDay.com

JulietteSpeaks.org

HowIBecameAnElephant.com

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