

# Animals In The News

## Asian Elephants Thrive At Center For Elephant Conservation



(NAPSA)—Within the next 20 years, the Asian elephant could go extinct in Southeast Asia. Asian elephants are an endangered species, and experts estimate that there are fewer than 35,000 left in the wild since the need for human settlements, agriculture and wood products threatens their habitats. Elephants' majestic size and valuable ivory tusks have also made them a target for hunters and poachers for centuries.

Fortunately, steps are being taken in the U.S. and all over the world to preserve this endangered species for future generations. In fact, in 1995, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® established the Center for Elephant Conservation (CEC). This \$5 million, state-of-the-art facility is dedicated solely to the conservation, breeding, retirement and study of the Asian elephant.

The CEC is located on 200 acres of wilderness in central Florida. The Asian elephants residing there are cared for in an environment that emphasizes security, comfort and health for these magnificent animals. Knowledge gained at the CEC is shared with scientists and researchers around the world to help in the race to save the endangered Asian elephant.

When the CEC opened in 1995, the facility was home to 27 ele-

phants, including four breeding males and six offspring. Over the years those numbers have grown.

"In 10 years, the Center's 23 elephants have produced 15 babies more than all other elephant breeding programs in the country put together," said John Kirtland, executive director of animal stewardship for Ringling Bros. and the CEC. "That's a great testament to their comfort, the superior care they get and the expertise of our staff."

Between the elephants at the CEC and those performing with *The Greatest Show On Earth*®, Ringling Bros. cares for the largest gene pool of Asian elephants outside Southeast Asia.

Asian elephants have long been a beloved part of the tradition and splendor associated with Ringling Bros. According to Kenneth Feld, producer of Ringling Bros., "The Asian elephant has always been a beloved part of *The Greatest Show On Earth*. Our efforts to save the species will ensure that people will be able to experience the joy and wonder of Asian elephants up close and personal for generations to come, and the CEC is a key part of that."

To learn more about the CEC and its work, visit the Web site at [www.elephantcenter.com](http://www.elephantcenter.com).

