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Contact: Jacki Ward Kehrwald, Communications Manager, 971.222.4662 [jacki@thecircusproject.org](mailto:jacki@thecircusproject.org)

## **AFTER 14 YEARS OF INNOVATIVE CIRCUS ARTS EDUCATION, THE CIRCUS PROJECT WILL CLOSE THIS FALL**

JULY 22, 2022 (PORTLAND, OR) The Circus Project, a Portland non-profit circus school, will dissolve at the end of the current summer term, citing financial struggles. Classes, lessons and rehearsals will continue through August 31st, and the organization will formally close by September 30, 2022.

“This decision is difficult to make,” reads the announcement from The Circus Project Board of Directors. “The Board explored numerous options in hopes of continuing The Circus Project’s 14-year history, and found dissolution to be the only responsible option.” The announcement references an “increase in rent and facilities, expanded programming, and instability from the Covid-19 pandemic” as influencing factors.

The Circus Project was founded in 2008 by circus artist and Process-Work therapist Jenn Cohen to use circus arts as an intervention for youth experiencing homelessness. “Circus in its best form is about embracing the totality of who we are,” Cohen said, “and bringing it forward in a way that makes it beautiful and magical and celebrates it.”

The Circus Project initially ran classes from The Friendly House, where they rented gym space hourly. Demand for their programs quickly outgrew the availability of the space, and in 2015 they moved to their current location, a converted warehouse space on NW 17th Ave which allowed them to expand the recreational school and offer circus summer camps.

The organization received many accolades, including founder Jenn Cohen receiving the Skidmore Prize for young nonprofit leaders, receiving financial support and partnership from Cirque du Soleil and the National Endowment for the Arts, being highlighted by BuzzFeed as one of the “Top Circuses that will Change the World,” and featured as a “Top Pick” for kid’s classes by PDX Parent five years in a row. The Circus Project has an influential presence on the national circus scene – training company students performed original work at the Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival and the American Youth Circus Organization festival, and Circus Project coaches are regular presenters with the American Circus Educators organization. Oregon Governor Kate Brown once said, “The Circus Project is the kind of innovative organization that puts Oregon on the map as a destination for arts and culture.”



The innovative instincts of the company saw them through the Covid-19 pandemic, where they pivoted quickly to offering online and outdoor classes. They envisioned, designed and built an open-air satellite studio, the Outdoor Domes, in order to continue offering circus training to their community while there were restrictions to gathering indoors.

“The Circus Project has had an immeasurable impact on the lives of so many students, staff and community members,” says board chair Nel Taylor. “Its legacy will live on long after we close the doors.”

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