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“Force Free” Animal Trainer Barbara Heidenreich, Search Dog Team Riley the Yellow Lab & Firefighter Eric Gray Featured at Saturday, June 16 “IMPROVology” Show

Animal Experts to Share Stories, Then Improv Comedians Take Over

(Santa Barbara, CA, June 29, 2018) – Leading animal trainer and behaviorist Barbara Heidenreich who developed the “Force Free” training system is among animal experts featured at the next IMPROVology show presented by the Santa Barbara Zoo. Also appearing is the search dog team of Santa Barbara firefighter and paramedic Eric Gray and a ten-year-old yellow lab named Riley who have responded to disasters in Japan, Nepal, and following the January debris flow in Montecito.

IMPROVology is held Saturday, June 16 at 7:30 p.m. at the Zoo’s Discovery Pavilion. The doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15, and \$12 for Santa Barbara Zoo Members. Buy at the door or online at www.sbzoo.org. More information at 962-5339. General admission seating, early arrival suggested; latecomers may be relegated to standing room only.



After a “TED Talk” style interview, their stories provide the fodder for on-the-spot comedy improvisation by members of L.A.’s Impro Theatre Company. Audience participation, musical accompaniment, snacks, and beer and wine are all part of the fun.

The host of the show is Dean Noble, the Zoo’s Marketing Director. Impro company members Kelly Holden Bashar, Stephen Kearin, Brian Lohmann, and Jo McGinley. Musical accompaniment is provided by Santa Barbara-based pianist Konrad Kono and bassist Michael Schindlinger, an expert in the languages of wild parrots who took part in an IMPROVology show and is now part of the IMPROVology “band” (of two).

“Be warned, thanks to Riley, IMPROVology has really gone to the dogs this time!” says Noble. “I’m not sure how ‘trainable’ our talented cast is, but if anyone can teach them to behave, it is Barbara Heidenreich.”

Barbara Heidenreich is a professional animal trainer and founder of Animal Training and Consulting Services. She has trained animals, trained staff, lectured and/or presented shows at over 50 facilities around the world, including the Santa Barbara Zoo. She has been a featured speaker on animal training in more than 20 countries and has been published in nine languages. She has trained thousands of animals, “from rats to rhinos,” and developed training materials including books, DVDs, supplies, and workshops.



Riley was presented to the Santa Barbara County Fire Department by the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation in Ojai, and was paired with **Eric Gray** in October 2009 after the yellow lab completed his training. The pair passed their FEMA Certification in Boston in May 2010, and are members of California Task Force 2, based on Los Angeles. They were deployed to Japan following the 2011 tsunami, to Nepal following the 2015 earthquake, and to Puerto Rico after the 2017 hurricane, among other assignments. Riley is a live scent disaster dog whose job is assisting urban search and rescue teams with locating people still alive and trapped in rubble following a disaster. Gray is a Santa Barbara County Fire engineer and a paramedic.



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*Known as one of the world's most beautiful zoos, the **Santa Barbara Zoo** is located on 30 acres of botanic gardens and is home to nearly 500 individual animals in open, naturalistic habitats. It is accredited by the [Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#) (AZA), representing the highest level of animal care, and participates in AZA endangered species programs for Asian elephant, California condor, Channel Island fox, and Western lowland gorilla, among others. A private nonprofit corporation, the Santa Barbara Zoo depends on community support, not tax dollars, for operations and improvements.*

The Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$18 for adults, \$13 for seniors aged 65+, \$10 for children 2-12, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$8 weekdays and \$11 on Saturdays and Sundays. Visit www.sbzoo.org.