



Media Contact:

Andrea Novotny
Novotny Communications
(608) 575-7739
anovotny@charter.net

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Tommy Bartlett Show Cancels its 69th Season for Summer 2020
amid Business Shutdown Orders and Concerns over COVID-19**

WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis. (May 5, 2020) – Due to Wisconsin’s “Safer at Home” order and uncertainty of when businesses can resume operations, the Tommy Bartlett Show will not be opening for the 2020 summer season. The venerable water ski, sky and stage show was slated to begin its 69th summer run in Wisconsin Dells on Friday, May 22 of Memorial Day weekend. With most businesses ordered shutdown statewide through May 26 and the uncertainty of large gatherings being allowed, the decision was made to not open the Show this summer.

“This is a very difficult decision for us to make, but having a little more than a 100-day window in which to host our Shows, leaves us with limited options to proceed,” said Tom Diehl, president and co-owner of the Tommy Bartlett Show, which typically runs two shows daily through Labor Day weekend.

Diehl says canceling the summer Tommy Bartlett Show is catastrophic to a small, family-owned business where all of the yearly revenue is generated in a three-month period between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. The residual effect of shuttering the Show also includes loss of a major live entertainment option for visitors and cancellation of a multitude of vendor contracts for outside agencies and suppliers who support the Show.

The company has notified its seasonal staff of 115 that they can no longer provide jobs for them this summer. Employees include stage performers and water-skiers, as well as seasonal ticket agents, concession workers, sound and lighting personnel, stagehands and grounds crew. While some of the employees are local, many of those who work at the Show each summer travel here from other locales to be part of the historic Show providing live entertainment for Wisconsin Dells visitors. The stage entertainers, in particular, feel an emotional toll of not performing, as they have been an integral part of the Show’s production for decades.

Tommy Bartlett created the Show in 1952, first as a touring water-ski exposition that traveled to World's Fairs, on U.S.O. tours and to other cultural exchange programs. Since making the shores of Lake Delton its permanent home in 1953, the Show evolved into a mix of waterskiing and high-speed boating, thrilling stage acts and comedy. It is a staple attraction for the area, shared by generations, including those who run the Show.

"I am saddened that we will not be having a Tommy Bartlett Show this summer," said Jill Diehl, who is executive vice president and general manager of Tommy Bartlett Inc. Jill grew up working at the Show and has been an integral part of its operation for most of her life. "This has been the defining element of every single summer of my life growing up here; watching the Show site come alive each spring, the days getting longer and warmer and our seasonal staff arriving to their home-away-from-home. They are our extended family," she added. "It's incredibly sad to realize it won't be happening. The Show is everything to our family and I feel heartbroken."

The Diehls add that while the Show will be dark this summer, they are optimistic in looking to summer 2021.

"While we know there are no guarantees, we are going into this with the forethought that this will not be the end. We will push forward with a plan to reopen the Show in 2021," said Jill Diehl.

As the health crisis eases, the company expects that its other attraction, Tommy Bartlett Exploratory, will reopen. The interactive science center had already put in place safe distancing measures and extra cleaning protocols before the complete shutdown. The company is focused on keeping its small staff of year-round employees working through this time helping run the Exploratory and keeping up basic operations.

"We will do what we can to stay afloat during this trying time in hopes that a year from now our valued customers will return for a nostalgic presentation of live entertainment on Lake Delton," Tom Diehl said.

The Tommy Bartlett Show is one of Wisconsin's most-beloved classic attractions. Generations of families have enjoyed a visit to the Show each summer during their Wisconsin Dells vacations. The Tommy Bartlett Show would typically run two shows daily from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. For more information, please call (608) 254-2525 or visit tommybartlett.com.

###