



MEDIA RELEASE

## **Tommy Bartlett Show Site and Tommy Bartlett Exploratory in Wisconsin Dells Sold to Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment**

**WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis.** (May 6, 2025) – The historic Tommy Bartlett Show site property in Wisconsin Dells has been sold along with its tandem attraction, Tommy Bartlett Exploratory, to Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment, a world-class leader in unbelievable family entertainment. The agreement, finalized May 5, marks the final chapter of the iconic Tommy Bartlett water-ski show that ran for 68 seasons before its closing in 2020 due to catastrophic loss of business from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Though this is a very bittersweet moment for our family as the finality of the sale comes into focus, we are excited that this historic prime spot along Wisconsin Dells Parkway will remain a place for great family entertainment for years to come," said Jill Diehl, president of Tommy Bartlett, Inc.

The sale includes 37 acres of land, including 827 feet of frontage at 560 Wisconsin Dells Parkway (Highway 12) in Lake Delton. The site also features 1,500 feet of shoreline that was home to the amphitheater where the famous Tommy Bartlett skiers and world-class stage acts performed each summer since 1952.

When the Tommy Bartlett Show closed permanently in September 2020, the Diehl family began the process of finding a buyer for the site. It was important to them to find an owner and developer committed to maintaining the location as a tourism-related attraction. Tom Diehl, the company's longtime visionary of 57 years, led the effort along with his wife and co-owner Margaret and their daughter Jill, a longtime Bartlett executive. When Tom passed away last August, Jill, as the company's successor, continued to finalize the sale of the property.

"We are thrilled that Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment, a world-renowned name in family entertainment, will be taking over the site and bringing a wonderful new attraction to our community in the future," said Diehl.

Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment also takes ownership of the Tommy Bartlett Exploratory – Interactive Science Center, which they plan to keep open and operating year-round.

"Ripley's has proudly been part of the Wisconsin Dells community through our Believe It or Not! attraction, and we're thrilled to expand our presence in this vibrant, family-focused destination. We're honored to carry on the legacy of the Exploratory and deeply respect the care the Diehl family has shown in preserving such a beloved attraction. With this acquisition and future development of the surrounding property, we look forward to delivering even more wonder and entertainment to the Dells," said Jim Pattison Jr., President of Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment.

As the flagship attraction, the Tommy Bartlett Show was the Diehl family's life work. While the Show was created by Tommy Bartlett, Tom and Margaret Diehl became co-owners with Bartlett in 1975 and full owners in 1998 when Bartlett passed. Their children, Jill and Jeffrey, grew up working at the Show, with Jill making it her life's career path. Many longtime employees, both seasonal and year-round, were also with the company for decades.

"Our current year-round staff and work family of seven have over 150 years of combined service to our Tommy Bartlett organization and the Wisconsin Dells tourism industry," added Diehl, "and many of our Tommy Bartlett alumni have become great friends of ours over the years, so this sale has an emotional impact on many."

The Tommy Bartlett Show began as a touring water-ski exposition that traveled to World's Fairs, on U.S.O. tours, and to other cultural exchange programs. After a stop in Wisconsin Dells in its first year, the Show became a permanent fixture on the shores of Lake Delton in 1953 and evolved into a mix of waterskiing and high-speed boating, thrilling stage acts, and comedy.

The Tommy Bartlett Show is one of Wisconsin's most beloved classic attractions, entertaining over 30 million visitors and performing more than 18,700 shows throughout its nearly seven-decade history. It was one of the longest running live outdoor entertainment shows of its kind in the world.

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#### **About Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment**

Built on the foundation of a daily newspaper cartoon in 1918 – still in print today – Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment has grown to be a global leader in family entertainment with more than 100 attractions across nine countries. Along with Ripley's Believe It or Not!, Ripley's Aquariums, Guinness World Records attractions, Great Wolf Lodge (Niagara Falls), wax museums, traveling shows, miniature golf courses, mirror mazes, and more, the world of Ripley's continues to grow through exciting new experiences and online content. Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment is a proud member of The Jim Pattison Group, Canada's largest private company.

Learn more about Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment by visiting [Ripleys.com](http://Ripleys.com) and following on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [TikTok](#).