

EVENTS

Ex-circus owner an expert on foreign labor

BY MICA ROSENBERG
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REUTERS

COVINGTON, Virginia — It was after midnight last spring when a bus dropped 20 road-weary Mexican workers outside this city of 6,000 people.

They had cleared customs, crossed the U.S. border, and spent parts of three nights in the bus before arriving at their new home for the next six months: a traveling carnival called Cole Shows Amusement Company.

No matter how many hours they worked, each would earn \$316.22 a week after taxes for assembling the rides, tearing them down and doing anything else to keep the show on the road.

Their new boss, R.C. Cole, greeted the workers and ushered them to the windowless trailers with narrow, 6-foot-long rooms — their living quarters for the coming months.

“Is there a bulb in there,” Cole asked in a gravelly drawl, futilely flipping a switch in one of the rooms. “No? We’ll need to get a new bulb over here.”

Cole could handle the trailer repairs. But he and more than 150 other carnival owners and concessioners across the nation have come to rely on a specialist to find the workers and get them the visas they need to

work in the United States.

Enter James Judkins, a man familiar with the needs of a traveling show. A former circus owner who once performed as a fire-eater and juggler, Judkins has emerged as the largest purveyor of Mexican workers for the \$500 million-a-year carnival industry. He is among a growing number of brokers who have become experts in securing visas and helping U.S. companies find cheap foreign labor.

The visas allow hundreds of thousands of workers from Mexico and other nations to come to the United States for months or years at a time and then return to their home countries. Democrats and Republicans alike see them as a welcome alternative to undocumented workers. Businesses owned by Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump are among those that have hired foreign workers for temporary jobs.

But critics contend that the visas programs, especially the one used by carnivals, leave workers vulnerable to exploitation. Under the H2B visa program, employers are allowed to hire foreign workers for low-skill, seasonal jobs that Americans don’t want. Government oversight is minimal.

Judkins, 58, teamed with a former circus colleague in Mexico to create what his

website calls a “one-stop shop” for employers looking to use foreign workers on H2B visas. Not only does he recruit the workers, but Judkins also navigates the visa process and arranges for their transportation to the job sites. He charges the carnivals \$300 per worker, Judkins said.

Supplying inexpensive labor has become especially critical to sustain the carnival industry, a part of Americana since the Ferris wheel was introduced at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago.

Juggling act

“American employers need these workers,” Judkins said, “and the workers need these jobs.”

Since he launched JKK Workforce in 2003, business has boomed. In his first year, Judkins gained U.S. government approval to bring about 100 workers into the country. This year, Judkins or those who work for him secured approval to bring in almost 4,000 Mexican workers, according to U.S. Department of Labor data. That would make him responsible for more than half of the foreign workers who handle the rides, booths and other concessions at America’s traveling carnivals.

The role requires Judkins to draw on a different sort of juggling skills than those he learned during his decades

in the circus. Talkative and genial, he lobbies lawmakers on labor issues. He organizes convoys of buses to get workers through crime-ridden parts of Mexico and into the United States. He also troubleshoots problems that inevitably surface after workers arrive in America.

In recent months, Judkins said, he arranged for the body of a worker who committed suicide during the spring to be sent back to Mexico, and he helped one jailed worker find a lawyer. Judkins said only that the man was accused of sexually abusing a carnival patron, pleaded guilty to a lesser charge and was released.

His company also is a subject of complaints filed in 2014 with the National Labor Relations Board. The charges, which Judkins disputes, allege that he illegally created a union to keep wages low for the Mexican carnival workers.

To attend an annual festival for the returning workers, Judkins traveled last week to the Mexican city of Tlapacoyan. That’s where partner Victor Apolinar, 48, recruits the workers who Judkins then matches with his clients. The relationship provides inexpensive labor for the carnival industry and opportunities for residents of the city of almost 60,000 about 300 km east of Mexico City. Work in the nearby citrus and banana

fields pays around \$10 a day, about a quarter of what’s offered by the carnivals.

Judkins and Apolinar often rely on past workers to vouch for new hires.

“In the beginning, when I was given the opportunity, I went to contact people at their homes to ask if they wanted to go to the U.S.,” Apolinar said as he sipped hot chocolate outside the church in Tlapacoyan’s town square earlier this year. “They began to see that it was beneficial to their families and started to say, ‘Look here, I have a brother, I have a friend who also wants to go.’ And that’s how the network grew.”

The network has served him well. In 2013, so great was Apolinar’s popularity that he was elected mayor of Tlapacoyan.

Complaints and concerns

The second oldest of 10 siblings, Apolinar says he understands the predicament that many in his native Tlapacoyan face. Apolinar recalled how, as a teenager, he was hungry for job opportunities in America. Seasonal work at a circus provided a ticket across the border.

There he met Judkins, who had been working circuses since college. Apolinar soon picked up the nickname “Pony” for handling the pony ride.

When Judkins started a

circus of his own, Circus Chimera, Apolinar signed on, traveling back and forth from Mexico each year on a work visa. After Judkins launched JKK Workforce, Apolinar agreed to spearhead recruitment in Tlapacoyan.

Judkins and Apolinar say the carnival workers they recruit pay only the cost of visa processing and transportation to the United States, around \$300, as legally permitted, and that certain carnival employers reimburse these fees. They say they have never charged workers for the jobs themselves, a violation of American law, and many workers attest to that.

Some workers, however, offer less-than-glowing reviews of their experience. Because Judkins and Apolinar have plenty of applicants to choose from, workers say it’s difficult to complain about working conditions without fear to being blacklisted. Workdays can last for 20 hours, and after they arrive in the United States, workers have few options but to do as they are told.

“You can’t say anything because if you do, the recruiter will say, ‘You cause a lot of conflict, you won’t be going back,’” said Jorge Garcia, who worked for eight seasons at carnivals.

Garcia is among a group *See Workers, Page C6*

Things to Do

AUGUSTA — Lithgow Public Library workshop on how to have difficult conversations related to dementia, 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, Ballard Center, 6 East Chestnut St. Free and open to the public. 626-2415 or lithgow.lib.me.us.

BANGOR — Sargent Tyler and West donation drive to benefit Manna Ministries, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, Jan. 4-6, 60 Summer St., No. 1. Accepting canned and nonperishable food items, furniture, clothing, cars and more.

BANGOR — “Limited Edition: Maine Printmakers,” 9 a.m.-7 p.m. daily, through Jan. 31, Boyd Place Gallery, 21 Boyd St. 941-2820.

BAR HARBOR — “Groundwork,” one-man play by Mike Ostroski and Derek Davidson, Maine debut, 7-9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8, Jesup Memorial Library. groundworktheplay.com, 288-4245 or kchagnon@jesuplibrary.org.

BATH — Rock group The Howligans, 7:30-9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8, Curtis Room of Chocolate Church Arts Center, 804 Washington St. Tickets \$10.

BLUE HILL — 52 Weeks of Giving program for children of all ages, 4-5:30 p.m. Fridays, starting Jan. 8, Blue Hill Public Library. Libby Edwanson, 374-5515.

BREWER — Schedule a Dog Ears appointment to read to Copper or Belle, canine tutors, 3:30-5 p.m. Jan. 6, 13, 20 and 27, Brewer Public Library, 100 South Main St. To sign up for a 15-minute segment, call the library at 989-7943.

BREWER — Work on knitting group’s community service project, in partnership with Brewer Police Department, or bring yarn projects of any sort, 9:30-11 a.m. Fridays, Jan. 8, 15, 22 and 29, Brewer Public Library, 100 South Main St. Experienced or new knitters, crocheters or needle-workers welcome. 989-7943.

BREWER — Book Club discussion on December’s book of the month, “The Fault in Our Stars” by John Green, 5:45-6:45 p.m. Monday, Jan. 4, Brewer Public Library, 100 South Main St. Pick

up the January book. 989-7943.

BREWER — Next Generation Theatre Teen Troupe performing “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8, and at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 9, and 2 p.m. Jan. 10, 39 Center St. Tickets, \$7, \$4 under age 17. 989-7100.

BRUNSWICK — World music and dance from the Balkans, Israel, Western Europe and around the globe, 6:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, People Plus, 25 Union St. Many dances taught. No partner needed. Admission by \$5 donation. Open to all. 200-7577, brennan.mk@gmail.com or folkdancebrunswick.com.

CAMDEN — Fourth and final session of Camden Conference New Africa Discussion Series, 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 5, Camden Public Library, 55 Main St. Group will reflect on challenges confronting Sub-Saharan Africa in joining global community. 236-3440.

CAMDEN — Essential Oil Health Creations hands-on craft workshop for adults, 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, Camden Public Library. \$10 materials fee. To register, 236-3440.

EASTPORT — Knights of Pythias, 6:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8 and Jan. 22, Eastport Youth Center. All past Knights requested to attend the meeting. Rick Green at 853-3008 or 904-7663.

ELLSWORTH — Book Discussion Group, 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 7, Riverview Room, Ellsworth Public Library. “All the Light We Cannot See” by Anthony Doerr will be discussed. 667-6363.

ELLSWORTH — Ellsworth Chess Club, 6-7:30 p.m. Thursdays, Ellsworth Public Library. 667-6363.

ELLSWORTH — Tightwad Exchange, noon-1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, Riverview Room, Ellsworth Public Library, 20 State St. Bring a lunch. 667-6363.

ELLSWORTH — Tuesday Readers book discussion group, 2-4 p.m. Tuesdays, beginning Jan. 5, Riverview Room, Ellsworth Public Library. Special viewing of documentary “Pray the Devil Back to Hell.” 667-6363.

ELLSWORTH — Knit, crochet or spin, 10 a.m.-noon Saturdays, beginning Jan. 2, all year, third floor Knitting Nook, Ellsworth Public Library. 667-6363.

HAMPDEN — December Vacation Art Program by Windover Art Center for ages 6 and up, through Jan. 1, Hampden Congregational Church, 101 Main Road North. 234-4503 or windoverart@gmail.com.

NEWCASTLE — VoXX “Music for the New Year” concert, 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 9, St. Andrews Episcopal Church, Newcastle. \$10. voiceoftwenty.com or info@voiceoftwenty.com.

ORONO — Kathy Lena of Twin Pines Photography sharing her photos of Maine’s wildlife, 1-2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, Orono Public Library, 39 Pine St. 866-5060.

PHIPPSBURG — State Street Traditional Jazz Band concert, 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 8, Phippsburg Congregational Church, 10 Church Lane. \$12, \$6 students, free to under age 8. Doors open 7 p.m. 389-1770.

PITTSFIELD — Coloring club program for adults, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, Pittsfield Public Library. Pages to color, colored pencils, markers and crayons provided, or bring your own. Soothing music and light refreshments. 487-5880.

PORTLAND — Choral Art Camerata rings in the New Year with its Epiphany Celebration, 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 3, Williston-Immanuel United Church, 156 High St. Features soprano Elisabeth Marshall and a newly composed piece by Jonathan David, winner of The Choral Art Society’s second annual Carol Contest. \$20; \$10 students. choralart.org.

PORTLAND — Disney on Ice presents “Treasure Trove,” 7 p.m. Jan. 6-7; 11 a.m. Jan. 9-10; 3 p.m. Jan. 9-10, Cross Insurance Arena, 1 Civic Center Square. \$15 and

up. crossarenaportland.com.

ROCKLAND — Farnsworth Art Museum and Strand Theatre First Friday Film, “Peggy Guggenheim: Art Addict,” 5:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 1, at the Strand. Tickets, \$8 museum members, \$10 others at the Strand box office.

ROCKPORT — Dr. Judy Kahrl talking about “Women of the New Africa,” 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 6, Rockport Opera House Conference Room. camdenconference.org.

Friday prime time

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM
BROADCAST	2 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	Caught on Camera	Dateline NBC (ESP HDTV)						News
	4 CBC Coronation	Coronation	Air Force New Year's Eve		The National (N)		Marketplace	Coronation	Coronation
	5 CBS Big Bang	Broke Girl	NCIS (HD)		Hawaii Five-0 (HD)		Hawaii Five-0 (HD)		News
	52 CW Family Guy	Family Guy	The iHeartradio Music Festival - Night 2 (HD)				News	Seinfeld	Cougar
	6 NBC 207 Inside Ed.	Caught on Camera	Dateline NBC (ESP HDTV)						News
	7 ABC Wheel	Jeopardy!	Last Man (31) Dr. Ken		Shark Tank (HD)		(01) 20/20 (HD)		News
	WAGM FOX The Insider	Ent. Tonight	MasterChef (HD)				To Be Announced		News
	8 ABC Wheel	Jeopardy!	Last Man (31) Dr. Ken		Shark Tank (HD)		(01) 20/20 (HD)		News
	MPBN PBS NewsHour	Great Performances (N) (HD)	Masterpiece Mystery! (N) (HD)				Salute		C. Rose
	9 IND *** The Help	(2011, Drama) Viola Davis, Emma Stone. (PG-13)					News-Lisa	CTV News	Big Bang
KIDS	13 CBS Ent. Tonight	The Insider	NCIS (HD)		Hawaii Five-0 (HD)		Hawaii Five-0 (HD)		News
	22 FOX Mod Fam	Mod Fam	MasterChef (HD)				FOX 22 News at 10 (N)		Bones
	33 IND M*A*S*H	M*A*S*H	Andy Griffith Andy Griffith		Happy Days Laverne		Hogan Hero Hogan Hero		C. Burnett
	38 IND Big Bang	Big Bang	Bones (HD)		Bones (HD)		WBZ News (N) (HD)		Seinfeld
LEARN	NICK	SpongeBob Alvinnn!!!	Alvinnn!!!	Alvinnn!!!	Full House	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends
	DISN	K.C. Under. Jessie	Jessie	Jessie	K.C. Under. K.C. Under.	Liv-Mad.	Girl Meets		Best Fr.
	FAM	(6:15) The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement	**** Cinderella (1950) Voices of Ilene Woods. (G)						700 Club
	HIST	Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	Cnt. Cars	American Restoration	Smartest	Smartest	Cnt. Cars
	DISC	Gold Rush: Road to Glory	Gold Rush - The Dirt (N)		Gold Rush (N)		Alaskan Bush: Off Grid		Gold Rush
SPORTS	TLC	Say Yes	Say Yes	Say Yes	Say Yes	Say Yes	Love: Lust	First Swipe	Say Yes
	A&E	Criminal Minds	Criminal Minds		Criminal Minds		Unforgettable (N)		Criminal
	ANPL	Finding Bigfoot	Tankd (N)		(01) Treehouse Masters		(01) River Monsters (N)		(01) Tankd
	CSNE	SportsNet	Early	Tailgate	Football	Post Game Live	Unfiltered	SportsNet	Patriots
NEWS	ESPN	(5:00) Rose Bowl Stanford vs. Iowa. (N)	Allstate Sugar Bowl Oklahoma State vs. Mississippi. (N)				Mississippi. (N)		
	ESPN2	High School Football	SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter (N)		SportsCenter (N)		SportCtr
	NBCSP	World Series of Fighting 23: Gaethje vs. Palomino II				World Series of Fighting 24 (Taped)			WSOF 25
	NESN	The Tradition	All Access	UMass	ACC	Football	Sports	Sports	Sports
VARIETY	CNBC	Shark Tank	The Profit		The Profit		The Profit		The Profit
	CNN	Anthony Bourdain Parts	Anthony Bourdain Parts		Anthony Bourdain Parts		Anthony Bourdain Parts		Anthony
	FNC	Greta Van Susteren	L&L: Real West		Man-Killed Bin Laden		Man-Killed Bin Laden		L&L
	MSNBC	Lockup Wabash	Lockup		Lockup		Lockup		Lockup
PREMIUM	AMC	Walk-Dead	The Walking Dead	The Walking Dead			The Walking Dead		
	BRV	Housewives/Atl.	Housewives/Atl.		Housewives/Atl.		*** Legally Blonde (2001)		
	CMT	Steve Austin's	Steve Austin's		*** Gran Torino (2008, Drama)		Clint Eastwood, Bee Vang. (R)		
	COM	(5:26) Me, Myself & Irene	* Mr. Deeds (2002) Adam Sandler. (PG-13)				*** Elf (2003) Will Ferrell. (PG)		
	E!	Botched	*** Charlie's Angels (2000) Cameron Diaz.				*** Charlie's Angels (2000, Action)		
	FOOD	Diners	Diners	Diners	Am. Diner	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners
	FX	(6:00) *** This Is 40 (2012)	Paul Rudd. (R)		*** The Internship (2013, Comedy)		Vince Vaughn. (PG-13)		
	GAC	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market	Flea Market
	HALL	(6:00) Merry Matrimony	A Christmas Melody (2015)		Mariah Carey. (NR)		The Middle	The Middle	Golden Girls
	HGTV	Island Life	Island Life	HGTV Dream Home 2016		Fixer Upper (N)	Hunters	Hunters Int'l	Design
STARZ	LIFE	Bring It!	Bring It! (N)		Bring It! (N)		(02) The Rap Game (N)		Rap Game
	MTV	*** Drumline (2002, Comedy-Drama)		Nick Cannon. (PG-13)		* Friday After Next (2002, Comedy)		Ice Cube. (R)	
	OXY	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City	Sex-City
	SPIKE	(6:00) *** The Expendables 2 (2012)	*** Escape Plan (2013, Action)		Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger. (R)				
	SYFY	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone	Tw. Zone
	TBN	Supernat.	Potters	Hal Lindsey	End/ Age	Perry Stone	The Call: 40 Years of God's Miracles		
	TBS	(6:00) The Hangover (R)	Broke Girl		Broke Girl	Broke Girl	* Killers (2010) Ashton Kutcher.		
	TCM	Close-3rd Kind	*** The Magnificent Seven (1960) Yul Brynner.				(15) *** M (1951) David Wayne. (NR)		
	TCM	(6:00) The Brothers Bloom	*** Wicker Park (2004) Josh Hartnett. (PG-13)		*** The Lovely Bones (2009)				
	TNT	Mummy: Dragon Emp.	* Wrath of the Titans (2012) Sam Worthington.				(15) ** Clash of the Titans (2010)		
PREMIUM	TRAVEL	Mysteries at the Museum	Mysteries at the Museum		Mysteries at the Museum		Mysteries at the Museum		Mysteries at
	TRU	truTV Top Funniest	truTV Top Funniest		truTV Top Funniest		truTV Top Funniest		Funniest
	TVL	Younger	Younger	Younger	Younger	* Big Daddy (1999) Adam Sandler. (PG-13)			King
	USA	Law & Order: SVU	Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU		Law & Order: SVU		Law-SVU
PREMIUM	VH1	Saturday Night Live	Saturday Night Live		Saturday Night Live		Saturday Night Live		SNL
	WGN-A	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met	How I Met
	ENC	(6:15) *** Uncle Buck (1989) John Candy. (PG)	*** Backdraft (1991, Action) (ESP) Kurt Russell, William Baldwin. Chicago firefighters work overtime to stop a mad arsonist. (R)				(20) *** Life (1999) (ESP) Eddie Murphy. (R)		
	HBO	(6:15) *** Fighting (2009) Channing Tatum.	** Exodus: Gods and Kings (2014, Action) (ESP) Christian Bale. Moses vows to free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. (PG-13)				(35) *** Lone Survivor (2013) Mark Wahlberg. (R)		
SHOW	MAX	(6:35) Ban-shee	(20) Ban-shee	(10) Banshee (ESP)	Banshee Lucas makes a momentous decision.		*** Walk of Shame (2014, Comedy) (ESP) Elizabeth Banks, Gillian Jacobs. (R)		
	SHOW	Shameless Frank gives up drinking		Shameless Frank needs his ex-wife's signature.		Shameless The children question their paternity.		Shameless Fiona finds new friend	Shameless
STARZ	STARZ	*** Courage Under Fire (1996, Drama) (ESP) Denzel Washington, Meg Ryan, Lou Diamond Phillips. (R)		Northmen: A Viking Saga (2014, Adventure) (ESP) Tom Hopper, Ken Duken. (R)		Evil Dead		(10) ** Aloha (2015)	