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Kansas City Kansas Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc. Announces Award Winners at Annual Tourism Celebration on May 9, 2017

Kansas City, KS....The Kansas City Kansas Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc (KCK CVB) celebrated another successful year at its annual Tourism Celebration on Tuesday, May 9, 2017. The luncheon was held at the Reardon Convention Center, 520 Minnesota Ave., in Kansas City, KS. Approximately 150 people were in attendance, including elected officials and tourism industry professionals. Commissioner Melissa Bynum presented a proclamation on behalf of Mayor Mark Holland and the Unified Government Commissioners proclaiming Tuesday, May 9, 2017 as National Tourism Day. Four awards were presented to the following tourism advocates and organizations.

The **Excellence in Hospitality Award** was awarded to **Jeff Hays**, Director of Sales and Marketing for Schlitterbahn Waterpark Kansas City. The award, chosen by the KCK CVB staff, recognizes Jeff for his support and partnership with the CVB, as well as his professionalism, hospitality and exceptional customer service to all visitors. Jeff grew up in Kansas City, KS and is a graduate of the University of Kansas. Maila Yang, Marketing & Communications Manager and Kerry Green, Group Sales and Partnership Manager of the KCK CVB presented the award to Jeff Hays.

The **Tourism Event of the Year Award** was presented to the **American Royal BBQ Contest** that was held on October 26 – 30, 2016 at Kansas Speedway. The World’s Largest Barbecue Competition began in Kansas City in 1980. Moving to Kansas Speedway in 2016 allowed for additional space for contestants and spectators as well as other activities. The event drew almost 50,000 people including team members, volunteers and the general public, resulting in record setting attendance. Kurt Mayo, Executive Director of the Kansas City Hotel & Lodging Association and a current KCK CVB board member presented the award. The award was accepted by Lynn Parman, President and CEO of the American Royal Association.

The **Tourism Organization of the Year Award** was presented to **Original Juan Specialty Foods**. Original Juan produces 160 different products, under 13 brands in their 60,000 square foot BRC Certified facility in Kansas City, KS. They celebrated their 20th year in March, 2017 and recently won a Gold sofi™ Award in the category of BBQ Sauce in the Specialty Foods Association’s 2017 sofi™ awards competition. Original Juan products are sold throughout the US and more than 20 countries around the globe. Using a Micro-Batch™ process, 500 gallon maximum batch size, they are committed to producing “small batches, with big flavor”. The award was presented by Unified Government Commissioner Brian McKiernan. The award was accepted by Michael Downs, Sales Manager of Original Juan Specialty Foods.

The **Tourism Advocate of the Year Award** was presented to **George Brajkovic** for his leadership and contributions to Kansas City, KS tourism. George is the City Manager of Tonganoxie, KS and a lifelong Wyandotte County resident. George recently left his position of 18 years with the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS serving as the Economic Development Director. He also served as the County Administrators appointee on the Kansas City KS Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors from 2015 – 2017. George’s consistent hard work and commitment to each development project while at the Unified Government will benefit the community for many years to come. The Tourism Advocate award was presented to George Brajkovic by Unified Government Commissioner Angela Markley.

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