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**International Bluegrass Music Association’s World of Bluegrass Celebrates Fourth Year with Record-Breaking Attendance and Economic Impact Figures***Figures reported by Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau*

**Raleigh, N.C. (Oct. 18, 2016)** – When the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) took a chance on Raleigh and moved its World of Bluegrass conference from Nashville, TN to North Carolina’s capital city in 2013, no one knew the impact that the change would have for either IBMA or Raleigh. In figures released today by the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB), this year’s World of Bluegrass week was record-breaking with **217,225 people attending the events associated with World of Bluegrass and generating $11.5 million in direct visitor spending.**

The week-long World of Bluegrass, brought to you by Chiesi USA, was held in Raleigh from **Sept. 27-Oct. 1** and included: the three-day IBMA Business Conference, the International Bluegrass Music Awards Show, Bluegrass Ramble, and the two-day PNC presents Wide Open Bluegrass, as well as the North Carolina Whole Hog Barbecue State Championship.

It is important to note that the **$11.5 million** is a conservative estimate that does not include local spending, nor does it include a multiplier of indirect or induced impacts. It represents direct visitor spending only, which is new money coming into the local economy.

“There’s no question that the multitude of events that make up World of Bluegrass have a positive impact on Raleigh’s economy,” said Loren Gold, executive vice president of the GRCVB and tri-chair of Raleigh’s Local Organizing Committee. “The festival not only boosts the destination’s economy and supports local businesses, but also garners national media coverage, welcomes thousands of visitors and solidifies Raleigh’s reputation as the state’s leading live music destination.”

“Raleigh continues to embrace the IBMA and World of Bluegrass as well as the entire bluegrass community,” said IBMA Executive Director Paul Schiminger. “The City of Raleigh, Raleigh Convention Center and the entire Local Organizing Committee are wonderful partners, working together to create a business conference, band showcases, the Bluegrass Ramble, exhibit hall and two-day festival – an unparalleled week devoted to bluegrass music. This year’s big jump in business conference, Wide Open festival, and exhibit hall attendance numbers are proof that the genre continues to grow at both professional and fan levels. The IBMA looks forward to being in Raleigh through 2018 and hopefully well beyond.”

**Bluegrass By The Numbers:**
*World of Bluegrass week (Sept. 27-Oct. 1) / Wide Open Bluegrass (Sept. 30-Oct. 1)*

Total Attendance for IBMA Business Conference, Bluegrass Ramble and Awards Show: 8,470
Total Attendance for PNC presents Wide Open Bluegrass *(Streetfest & Red Hat Amp. shows):* 208,755

**Total Attendance for entire World of Bluegrass Week (Sept. 27-Oct.1): 217,225**

Estimated Number of Visitors from outside of Wake County: 92,000
Estimated Number of Hotel Room Nights during entire week of World of Bluegrass: 21,200

**Total Direct Economic Impact from Visitors for World of Bluegrass Week: $11.5 million**

In addition to the visitor spending, IBMA’s World of Bluegrass also produced in $1.3 million in media value for Greater Raleigh. This figure was researched and calculated using data provided by Cision*.* Cision is a leading global media intelligence companywhich uses readership data based on domestic and international media impressions from a variety of mediums to calculate earned media value.

One particularly noteworthy bit of national media coverage happened on Friday morning before the festival kicked off - NBC broadcasted segments of *The Today Show*, its daily morning show, from downtown Raleigh on Sept. 30 to showcase the festival, as well as North Carolina food and culture. Longtime “Today” weatherman and co-host Al Roker came to Raleigh to host those segments. Between 7 and 10 a.m., Roker was featured in segments from downtown Raleigh in every hour - the requisite “Today” cooking segment featured Matthew Register of Southern Smoke Barbecue of Garland, N.C. GRAMMY award winning bluegrass musicians Jerry Douglas and The Earls of Leicester also appeared on the program in advance of their main stage festival appearance on Friday night, and young North Carolina band ShadowGrass also performed on the program. Local NBC affiliate WRAL was a media sponsor for the festival.

“Corporate and private sponsorships are a key element in the marketing, fan activation and support for all the various facets of this city-wide, multi-venue event,” said William Lewis, IBMA Board member and Executive Director of PineCone, the local nonprofit organization that produces the music component of both the festival’s ticketed Main Stage and the free StreetFest. “Without the support of sponsors like PNC and Chiesi, along with strong North Carolina brands like Lowes Foods and Cheerwine, global brands like Chevy, and many others, this event could not provide the unique activities, unparalleled hospitality and of course, phenomenal music that visitors from around the world have grown to love.”

The 2016 festival featured an expanded footprint this year, extending the festival south all the way to Lichtin Plaza in front of Raleigh’s Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, activating the complete half mile length of Fayetteville Street.

Accessibility was another area of focus for the local organizing committee in the 2016 event. The local organizing committee worked with Mobility Concepts to set up a wheelchair and scooter rental option on-site at the festival, in addition to launching a pilot program that paired sighted guides with festival attendees who were blind or low vision to help them navigate the festival. The local organizing committee looks forward to expanding these offerings in future years and to developing and implementing additional accessibility initiatives as part of the festival.

IBMA – the International Bluegrass Music Association – is the professional trade organization for the global bluegrass music community. The organization’s six-year stay in Raleigh is the result of a partnership with the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Raleigh Convention Center, PineCone—The Piedmont Council of Traditional Music, the City of Raleigh and a local organizing committee.

The Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, as the official destination and marketing organization of Raleigh and Wake County, accelerates sustainable economic growth and development by increasing visitor and convention business. Through its website www.visitRaleigh.com and other tools, the GRCVB assists local visitors in a variety of ways.

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