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Kansas Tourism Professionals Receive Awards

Awards presented at annual Kansas tourism industry meeting

Topeka, Kan. – Kansas tourism professionals presented several awards at the 2018 Kansas Tourism Conference awards banquet held October 24, 2018 at the Geary County Convention Center in Junction City, Kan. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) presented the following awards:

- **Governor's Tourism Award – Friends of the Kaw**
Established in 1983 to recognize outstanding contributions by individuals or organizations to the Tourism Industry, the Governor's Award encourages others to strive for excellence. The award demonstrates cooperation, sustainability, quality and accountability. The Kansas River is a recreational treasure and has been a well-kept secret among a few paddlers and anglers, but it is fast becoming a valued recreational resource for thousands of visitors each year. KDWPT has worked with Friends of the Kaw and local communities along the Kansas River to develop more than 20 public access points for public recreation as well as wayfinding signs and increased awareness of the recreational opportunities on the Kansas River. In 2012, the Kansas River was the second river designated as a National Water Trail.
- **Kansas Tourism Partnership Award – The Nature Conservancy**
For nearly 30 years, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been working in Kansas to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. They've permanently protected 139,470 across the state, including five preserves that are open to the public. In 2016, TNC bought a 330-acre tract of land in Logan County that encompasses 250 acres of Niobrara chalk formations. The property adjoins the Smoky Valley Ranch which is owned by TNC. In 2018, the Kansas Legislature formally designated the chalk formations as Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park. KDWPT and TNC are collaborating to design access to the park and build trails to protect the fragile formations and unique ecology of the area. The award recognizes the importance of collaboration in the successful development of tourism in Kansas.
- **Kansas' Finest Awards** – Rebecca (Beccy) Tanner, Wichita, author and Kansas professor at Wichita State University; Patty & Jerry Reece, Shawnee Mission, Tallgrass Prairie and Wabaunsee County Champions; Doc R.C. Trotter, Dodge City, doctor and Dodge City Roundup President, and Joe Minick, Enterprise, machinist and co-creator of the Abilene & Smokey Valley Railroad. The Kansas' Finest award recognizes and honors advocates who promote the state's attributes and maintain an abiding love for the sunflower state, exhibiting passion, perseverance, and pride in promoting destinations with statewide significance and national or international relevance.

"These awards highlight the vital role of dedicated individuals and organizations in growing the tourism industry in Kansas. Through their partnership, Kansas tourism will continue to be a significant part of the state's economy. A recent economic impact survey indicates tourism has grown to an \$11 billion industry in Kansas, one of the fastest growing industries in Kansas." said Linda Craghead, KDWPT Interim Secretary.

The Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK) also recognized its membership's top marketing talent. TIAK Marketing Awards focus on overall marketing initiatives and recognize state-level winners only.

- **People's Choice:** *Totos Around Town* was honored for its artwork from Kansas Artists on Toto statues located throughout Wamego. Each Toto was "adopted" by a local business, organization or individuals.
- **Visitors Guide (designed in-house):** *Sherman County Convention & Visitors Bureau* won in the small budget category for its Sherman County Visitor Guide, providing fun facts and a look behind the scenes. *Merriam Visitors Bureau* dazzled received bragging rights in the medium budget category with its eye-catching Merriam Visitor Guide, and the large budget winner was *Visit Topeka* for its attention-grabbing Topeka Visitor Guide.
- **Visitors Guide (outsourced):** *Kansas Sampler Foundation* was awarded the small budget win for its Big Kansas Road Trip Guide, which incorporated a scavenger hunt. *Emporia Convention & Visitors Bureau* received the medium budget trophy for their Emporia Visitor Guide with its magazine-style layout, and *Visit Manhattan* won in the large budget for their rearranged and photo-driven Manhattan Visitor Guide.
- **Online Marketing:** *Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce* was recognized in the small budget category for its "Wamego Becomes Boomtown USA" website. *Kansas City, Kansas Convention & Visitors Bureau* received recognition in the large budget category for its Facebook Live Series, engaging with stakeholders creatively.
- **Integrated Campaign:** *Kansas Sampler Foundation* was honored in the small budget category for its promotion of the "Big Kansas Road Trip" campaign. *Emporia Convention & Visitors Bureau* received the medium budget win for their Disc Golf Campaign, and *Merriam Visitors Bureau* garnered Honorable Mention in the same category for their Tour Merriam Campaign. *eXplore Lawrence* received large budget honors for its "Block by Block" Campaign, highlighting all of its historical real estate.
- **Print Marketing:** *Marysville Convention & Tourism* won in the small budget category for its newspaper advertisement that included strong photography. The medium budget winner was *Emporia Convention & Visitors Bureau* for their cleverly-headlined magazine ads, and *Visit Manhattan* received the large budget win for their Oh Manhattan! print ads.
- **Community Awareness:** *Wamego Area Chamber of Commerce* was honored in the small budget category for its "Totos Around Town" project. *Hays Convention & Visitors Bureau* won in the medium budget category for its welcome banners on Vine Street, and *eXplore Lawrence* received the large budget category win for their videos on weekly things-to-do.

"The travel industry plays a significant role in enhancing the Kansas economy. These awards are examples of the superb efforts, from all regions of the state, that go into marketing Kansas as a quality visitor destination." said TIAK president Jan Stevens.

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The *Tourism Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism* is charged with encouraging the public to visit and travel in Kansas by promoting recreational, historic and natural advantages of the state and its facilities. The Division focuses on measurable goals in its marketing and promotional efforts, which include increasing domestic and international inquiries through advertising and public relations efforts and converting those inquiries into visits to Kansas, increasing group tour visits, and generating positive public perceptions about the state as a travel destination. For more information, visit TravelKS.com.

The *Travel Industry Association of Kansas* is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and development of travel and tourism in Kansas. For more information, visit www.tiak.org.

Photos – Credit to David Mayes:

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