



- **2023 Attraction of the Year – Kansas City Monarchs**

Take me out to the ballgame with this attraction. They boast a legacy name with some new age thinking. **The Kansas City Monarchs** just recently won the 2023 American Association Championship, after also holding the best record in their league in the regular season. It was a dominate season and a dream season. This is their third Championship in the last five years! But there is so much more to this story than on-field success. This has been a rejuvenation project, with further examples of collaboration. In 2021 the team announced a partnership with the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and rebranded themselves at the “Monarchs.” Monarchs leadership, led by Mark Brandmeyer, Mark McKee, and Jay Hinrichs, also focused on ancillary events. They wanted to bring Legends Field to life and make it a year-round venue. With that, they have brought in fans from all over the nation, with events like the Tacos and Tequila Festival, Country Roots Festival, Rock and Rumble Fight Night, and Lacrosse Border Showdown. Over the last few months, they have also hosted America’s largest bounce house, a baseball themed haunted cocktail event, and upcoming, a Christmas light maze experience called “Enchant”. But let’s not forget, the Monarchs also hosted exhibition games against the popular Savanna Bananas. The Bananas and the mania around them had Legends Field as one of their stops on their world tour. The Monarchs brought in over 25,000 “Bananians” over a weekend of exhibition games. This created valuable tourism impact in that area. The Monarchs are constantly thinking of new ways to innovate, be relevant, and engage visitors. They are a winning organization on and off the field.

- **2023 Individual Achievement Award – Laurence Gration, American Truck Historical Society**

Everything we eat, drink, wear is hauled by a truck. This is how goods are moved and rooted in how our economy moves. Trucks played a role in shaping American history. And with that there needs to be a deeply committed and highly esteemed leader to tell that story. For the last six years, **Laurence Gration** has been the Executive Director of the American Truck Historical Society. This research library and archives, founded in 1971 right here in Kansas City, is dedicated to documenting the history of trucks, the trucking industry, and its pioneers. With over 20,000 members in 20 different countries, their mission is to preserve manuals, photographs, magazines, and catalogs to capture this history. Under Gration’s direction, they transformed their visitor center, which is located off “I-29” highway, near the airport. The center has engaging exhibits, displays, and programming to celebrate the culture and impact of trucks overtime. Laurance has also collaborated with educational institutions and local groups to share the trucking industry’s heritage. He’s created a positive impact in the community through charitable work, event sponsorships, awarding scholarships, and his work on preserving historical

landmarks. Mr. Laurence Gration is leaving a legacy to inspire future generations. He practices what he preaches as a visionary leader and strong tourism advocate.

- **2023 Special Project Award – Kansas City Sports Commission & Foundation**

Kansas Citians, you were on the clock! This past Spring showcased how Kansas City attractions and organizations can come together and execute a world-class event. **The 2023 NFL Draft**, a 3-day mega event, was a huge project undertaken by the Sports Commission. They were tasked with raising funds, managing a city-wide effort, and tackling site logistics. The Draft saw very strong television ratings and social media engagements, creating unmatched visuals of Kansas City. Other attractions such as Union Station and the National World War I Museum and Memorial were on full display. There were over 1,000 media members experiencing Kansas City over that weekend. Positive impressions were made. Results show a local economic impact of \$164 million. There are also further stories to tell here on the Sports Commission's work:

- Organized the city's volunteer brigade. They recruited and coordinated 1,200 volunteers to bring the NFL Draft to life.
- Procured 25 local food vendors for the fanfest footprint, with half of them being minority and women-owned businesses.
- Donated a bunch of leftover materials, food, and beverages after the Draft to 24 local non-profits.

Kansas City took center stage in the sports world that weekend, and the teamwork at the Sports Commission was at the heart of it all.

- **2023 Allied Member of the Year – IN Kansas City Magazine**

**IN Kansas City Magazine** is an organization that lives, works, and plays both on and off the page. They are a locally owned and a women owned business. They focus on lifestyle branding and city experiences. The magazine has been a valuable branding arm for the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association. They hit the ground running in their first year as a member. Their staff welcomed us with open arms and with an enthusiasm to collaborate. They've provided us the ability to highlight our members through their various marketing, advertising, and media platforms. They give space to attractions. They talk about attractions. They care about attractions.

- **2023 Ambassador of the Year – Marge Wolfer, Kansas City Royals**

For the last 10 years, **Marge Wolfer** has been a staple of the Kauffman Stadium gameday experience, mainly working at the home plate entrance. Marge's infectious smile and enthusiasm lead the way. She takes pride in her job as a Royals teammate. She is always kind, friendly, and engaging. Her positive energy is palpable, and she cares about guests on a personal level. If she finds out it's your birthday – watch out – she will then serenade you with the happy birthday song, with other fans joining in. But she's known for her infectious hugs to fans and staff members. Credit to her for her work ethic as well, as she is everywhere! She's been spotted as a Guest Ambassador not only at the Royals, but also at the Chiefs, Sporting KC, and the T-Mobile Center. She is Kansas City's heart!