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Greater Kansas City Attractions Association Announces 2018 Heart of Kansas City Award Winners

(Kansas City, MO) – Nearly 100 representatives of Kansas City area entertainment and tourism businesses were in attendance at the 2018 annual meeting of the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association (GKCAA) yesterday at the City Stage Theater at Union Station. They came together to learn about the association’s accomplishments during the past year and celebrate the announcement of the GKCAA’s 2018 Heart of Kansas City Award winners.

Founded almost 25 years ago, the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association includes members from many of the city and region’s top attractions, ranging from sports teams including the Kansas City Royals and Sporting KC, museums like The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum and the National World War I Museum and Memorial, arts organizations including the Kansas City Ballet and Kansas City Symphony, theme parks like Worlds of Fun and Schlitterbahn, plus historic sites, major retail centers, hotels, event spaces and outdoor experiences on both the Missouri and Kansas sides of the state line.

For the second year, the association presented its Heart of Kansas City Awards in four categories. The awards recognize individuals and organizations that have gone above and beyond expectations to further the goals, objectives and spirit of the Kansas City region’s tourism and hospitality industries. Nominees are required to be members, employees or volunteers associated with a GKCAA member organization. All nominations are evaluated by a subcommittee of the GKCAA board.

Fox 4 reporter Matt Stewart served as emcee of the GKCAA event and presented the 2018 Heart of Kansas City Awards to the following honorees:

- **Individual Achievement Award – Mark McHenry**

Mark McHenry has dedicated the past 44 years of his professional life to the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department. During his tenure, his involvement has led to the addition of 34 new parks across the city, six new community centers, a doubling in the size of the Kansas City Zoo, revitalization of Starlight Theatre, addition of the National World War I Museum to the Liberty Memorial and so much more. In 2003, McHenry was appointed director of KC Parks and Recreation, becoming only the seventh director in the department’s 126-year-old history. He

will retire at the end of 2018.

- **Allied Member of the Year – CTM Media Group**

CTM Media Group promotes the local hospitality and tourism industries through distribution of promotional materials. The company was recognized for its dedication to supporting GKCAA member attractions by regularly donating inventory in its distribution locations across the metro and throughout Missouri and offering reduced fees for its services to GKCAA members. Koni Reese, CTM Midwest Director of Sales and GKCAA board member, also is highly proactive in sharing the benefits of the GKCAA membership with attractions new to the Kansas City area. Reese accepted the award on behalf of CTM Media Group.

- **Ambassador of the Year – Jan Morevitska of Starlight Theatre**

Jan Morevitska is Starlight Theatre's longest-tenured and most passionate volunteer, marking her 50th season of continuous service in 2018. Morevitska joined the Starlight family in 1969 as a member of the Starlight Women's Committee and, later, the Starlight Ambassadors. She has volunteered in nearly every capacity at the theatre, from leading backstage tours to ushering to assisting with auditions, cast parties and so much more. Morevitska also has served as president of the Starlight Ambassador Advisory Team multiple times, leading and coordinating the efforts of nearly 200 Starlight volunteers each year.

- **Attraction of the Year – The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art**

An institution that has been part of Kansas City's cultural landscape for 95 years, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art attracts more than 500,000 visitors annually. The museum connects people of all ages and interests through the power of arts, hosting a range of special events including Third Thursdays for young professionals, the Big Picnic for the entire community, Dia de los Muertos, Chinese New Year and the American Indian Cultural Celebration. The Nelson also is home to "one of America's Top 10 Lawns with a View" and has been widely touted by media including *The New York Times*, *CBS Morning News*, *Artnet News* and more. Director & CEO Julián Zugazagoitia accepted the award on behalf of the museum.

In addition to the four Heart of Kansas City Awards, the GKCAA introduced a new award that will be given at the discretion of the board annually. The inaugural **Legacy Awards** were presented to the three individuals who founded the GKCAA in 1994:

- **Marcia Butterbaugh**, formerly of the Hyatt Regency at Crown Center
- **Stacy McCullough**, former president of Spenger-McCullough Marketing
- **Kirk Schnurbusch**, former marketing director at Worlds of Fun

"We hope all of our member organizations leave here tonight with an even better understanding of the value the association brings to your attraction, as well as to our community," said Vietti, who also serves as director of marketing, communications and guest services at the National World War I Museum and Memorial. "2019 is going to be another great year for the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association."

[About the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association](#)

The GKCAA is a not-for-profit member organization dedicated to enhancing the success of member attractions through the strategic initiatives of collective marketing, membership services, networking and educational programs, advocacy as a collective voice, and providing opportunities to connect with local businesses interested in supporting the Greater Kansas City area's tourism industry. For a complete list of members and to learn more, visit attractionskc.org or facebook.com/AttractionsKC.

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