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Greater Kansas City Attractions Association Announces 2019 Heart of Kansas City Award Winners

(Kansas City, MO) – Excellence in tourism and hospitality were recognized last night as nearly 100 representatives of the Greater Kansas City Attractions Association (GKCAA) were in attendance at the 2019 year-end annual meeting yesterday at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art for the announcement of the GKCAA’s 2019 Heart of Kansas City Award winners.

For the third year, the association presented its Heart of Kansas City Awards in three 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 event and along with association President Angie Jeffries, who serves as the director of communications for Jackson County, presented the 2019 Heart of Kansas City Awards to the following honorees:

- **Individual Achievement Award – George Guastello; Union Station**

The CEO of Union Station was selected in recognition of completing a massive maintenance project of the historic landmark ahead of schedule and under budget, and for leading the orchestration of the largest public art display installed in Kansas City in the form of the “Reflecting Motion” sky sculpture that attracted more than 100,000 visitors in spring 2019.

“What an honor,” said Guastello, who went on to recognize his staff. “It’s the people around you who make you who you are. Our goal in the attractions community in Kansas City is to leave a last a lasting memory for the guests who come here.”

- **Ambassador of the Year – Linda Brookshier; Clay County Historic Sites**

Brookshier is an historic interpreter at the Clay County Historic Sites' Jesse James Birthplace and was selected for going above and beyond to the welcome guests to the historic site. The Ambassador of the Year award honors staff and volunteers on the front lines of the attractions industry, who often provide the most lasting impression on visitors.

"They told me I needed to come tonight because my boss was winning an award," said a surprised Brookshier. "I am just blown away and humbled by this award."

- **Attraction of the Year – The National WWI Museum and Memorial**

The 2018 TripAdvisor Top 25 museum was selected for its fall 2018 events to mark the centennial commemoration of the World War I armistice. The attraction drew 100,000 people to its grounds for the "Peace and Remembrance" public illumination November 2-11 which also generated more than 540 stories through national and regional media outlets. The museum drew over 500,000 guests for its fourth year in a row, coming from 88 countries and six continents during the last year.

"As we discussed plans for the centennial, an idea came up to create a public art experience to illuminate the Tower with poppies to help people experience this important event," said President and CEO Dr. Matthew Naylor in accepting the award. "It was an intersection between history and attraction and entertainment and museum. We are delighted and honored by this award."



(Dr. Matthew Naylor – National WWI Museum and Memorial, Linda Brookshier – Jesse James Birthplace, Angie Jeffries – GKCAA President/Director of Communications – Jackson County, George Guastello – Union Station).

"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 Jeffries. "2020 is going to be a big year for Greater Kansas City Attractions Association as we celebrate our 25th anniversary."

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, entertainment venues like Worlds of Fun and Main Event, plus historic sites, major retail centers, hotels, event spaces and outdoor experiences on both the Missouri and Kansas sides of the state line.

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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