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For immediate release

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Chinese Lantern Festival's Asian Cuisine/Chicago Weekend at Milwaukee County's Boerner Botanical Gardens, Sept. 29-Oct. 1

MILWAUKEE (Sept. 25, 2017) — Each night this weekend, Boerner Botanical Gardens will be filled not only with dramatic displays of color, light, and sound, but also with Asian-inspired cuisine to tempt visitors' taste buds—and the first 2,000 visitors from Illinois who present identification at the admission gate will receive a free China Lights premium.

China Lights: The Magic Returns is a celebration of Asian culture featuring 50 larger-than-life sculptural lantern displays illuminating 10 acres of Milwaukee's renowned Boerner Botanical Gardens, in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI. The festival, presented by Tri City National Bank, also celebrates Asian culture with professional entertainment, a bustling marketplace, and a wide variety of food and beverage options. The event runs through Oct. 22, Tuesday through Sunday, from 5:30–10 p.m., with a 5 p.m. opening for people who purchase the VIP ticket package. The festival is closed Mondays.

Asian Cuisine Weekend, Sept. 29–Oct. 1

Food specials, egg-roll-eating contests, healing-arts talks, and free chair-massages are being offered this weekend.

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Asian Cuisine Weekend: Food & Beverage

From Kowloon beef to a western-style pig roast, several menus will be expanded to offer sampler plates or special items. Regular menus of Asian and Western food options will also be available. Friday through Sunday, Zilli Hospitality Group will offer a special sampler platter. Other vendors will offer specials Saturday and Sunday. Lychee Gardens will present two offers: an appetizer platter containing Kowloon beef, BBQ pork, and pot stickers (\$10), and, for every purchase of \$10 or more, an egg roll will be added to the order for free. Gift of Wings Grill will host a pig roast with a special-recipe BBQ sauce. The BBQ sandwich comes with beans and chips (\$12). Tanpopo/Greenfish will offer Sweet Buns (six for \$3.50). Additional food service is provided by Wisconsin Fried Cheese Curds and T. Best Kettle Corn Co.

Food service is available in two concessions areas, both with picnic table seating near the performance stages, one with a smaller more intimate atmosphere. Both areas also offer beverage service including, Tsingtao (a lager from China), original Ozeki Sake, domestic and premium tap beers, and wine. Non-alcoholic bottled beverages include citrus green tea, sodas, and water.

The new Ralph's Wine & Sake bar, serving beverages only, offers a cozy area with bistro tables. In addition to serving four styles of wine, the bar offers Ozeki's flavored and sparkling sake, craft sodas including Sprecher's Lychee and Asian Pear, coffee, hot chocolate, and hot tea.

Asian Cuisine Weekend: Egg Roll Eating Contests

People who like to make eating a competition are invited to take part in the Zilli Hospitality Group Egg Roll Eating Contest on Saturday and Sunday at 6:50 p.m. Signup begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Dragon Stage. The competition is limited to the first eight people who sign up each night. The winner is the person who eats the most egg rolls in 88 seconds or eats eight egg rolls, whichever comes first. There is no fee to enter the contest. All participants will receive the China Lights souvenir lantern (as well as their untouched egg rolls to share with friends or family). The first-place winner will also take home a China Lights t-shirt and sweatshirt. Contest rules will be posted at chinalights.org.

Asian Cuisine Weekend: Healing-Arts Demonstrations and Free Chair Massage

During the weekend, talks and demonstrations will illustrate the Chinese Healing Arts, where traditional techniques meet modern science.

On both Saturday and Sunday, Dr. Xiping Zhou, a Medical Doctor of Oriental Medicine and Licensed Acupuncturist, will present two short informative talks with hands-on demonstrations and question-and-answer periods. Self-Care Acupressure and Massage will be presented on the Panda Stage at 7:20 p.m., and The Healing Power of Acupuncture will be presented on the Dragon Stage at 7:50 p.m.

Zhou was trained in China at HeiLongJiang University, where he studied both mainstream Western medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine. There, he served as chief physician and full professor. Since the mid '90s, Zhou has practiced and taught in the Madison, Racine, and Milwaukee areas. In 1999 he joined the staff of Columbia St. Mary's Hospital as one of the first acupuncturists on staff at any Wisconsin hospital. He is founder and director of the East-West Healing Arts Institute and Dr. Zhou's Acupuncture Wellness Clinic. He specializes in pain management, stroke rehabilitation, women's health, and body-mind integration.

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Saturday and Sunday from 6:30-8:30 p.m., three students at the East-West Healing Arts Institute will perform Tui Na, or Chinese medical massage, as chair massage in the Garden House. All work will be done under the supervision of one of the school's licensed massage therapists. Visitors may sign up in advance for a free 5- to 10-minute massage.

Lantern Displays

Even before reaching the Welcome Gate, visitors have been impressed by the first display, the Porcelain Tower. Those who take a closer look are amazed by the intricate work of the Chinese artisans who brought together 60,000 porcelain bowls, bottles, cups, plates, and spoons to create the nearly 40-foot-tall structure.

When inside the exhibition, visitors often find that each display is more magical than the last. For about a month, 24 artisans from China were on-site welding metal frames, lighting the frames from within using various types and colors of LED lights, covering the framework in brightly colored fabric, and hand-painting finishing touches. Among the components that emerged from the process are a 200-foot dragon, a phoenix with a long undulating tail, glowing flowers, swans, fish, and pandas.

Youths can lend a hand—or, more precisely, their feet—to power one of the displays. In the Perennial Garden, a bicycle is connected to an elephant lantern, known by staff as “pedal the pachyderm.” Visitors can hop on the bike and pedal to illuminate the elephant.

One of the many displays providing visitors a photo op is the Love Gallery, an archway formed by a series of heart shapes. The display may turn out to be this fall's most popular location to “pop the question.”

Throughout the exhibition, one-way traffic flows are being implemented. On-site signage indicates routes through the display areas.

Cultural Entertainment

Each night at about 6:15 p.m. members of the entertainment staff lead the Illumination Parade, a procession through the displays in the Shrub Mall. The parade concludes at the Dragon Stage, the main stage, in time for the first performance of the night.

Two stages highlight folk-culture entertainment. In addition to the Dragon Stage, the smaller, more intimate Panda Stage offers professional acts. Performances are staggered between the stages beginning at about 6:30 p.m. During the week, four shows are offered each night; Friday through Sunday, six shows. The night's schedule is posted at the Welcome Gate.

Acrobats, martial artists, and musicians are among the performers. Some of the acrobatic feats, such as plate spinning, catching bowls on a unicycle, or performing tricks with the Chinese yo-yo, require calm conditions. If winds are too strong, other of the many professional acts will go on. One example is face changing, or mask changing, the ancient Chinese art form from the Sichuan opera. Performers wear thin masks that change with the passing of a fan. Another performance to see is the demonstration of baji, a kind of tai chi that features explosive, short-range strikes. The two martial artists demonstrating the form have placed first and third in some of China's national competitions. In addition, traditional Chinese folk music will be performed on the erhu, or two-stringed Chinese violin. The instrument, which is played vertically and has free-floating strings, is said to imitate the sound of thousands of horses running on the grassland.

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Cultural Displays

For China Lights, the Garden House is the center for cultural displays. Examples of traditional Asian clothing are on display. Additional small-sized clothing items are available for visitors to try on for a photo op. Also on view in the Garden House are videos highlighting the making of the Porcelain Tower display, China's natural beauty, history, and culture.

The Chinese Marketplace

In the colorful marketplace, visitors find an abundance of souvenir items as well as the opportunity to watch Chinese artisans create traditional handicrafts. Clothing, toys, jewelry, and artwork are for sale. Some of the crafts being demonstrated include name painting, rice engraving, inner-bottle painting, and aluminum weaving. Name painting combines calligraphy with vivid imagery to create a work of art. Rice engraving requires a microscope and a steady hand to carve a Chinese poem, a person's name, or special wishes on a grain of rice. When complete, the tiny artwork is preserved in oil in a synthetic crystal capsule. Inner-bottle painting, also known as painting snuff bottles, involves using a bent brush to paint figures inside a bottle, leaving the artwork protected. In aluminum weaving, thin metal wires are formed into ornaments representing flowers, dragons, and even motorcycles. The marketplace is more than a place to shop; it is a cultural experience.

Admission/Fees

China Lights admission tickets are valid any night of the regular 2017 schedule.

Admission is \$15 for adults (age 18–59) and \$10 for seniors (age 60 and up) and children (age 5-17). Children under age 5 are admitted free. For \$30, a patron may purchase a one-visit VIP ticket, which includes early admission at 5 p.m., the mobile guide, a collectible Chinese hand fan which serves as the admission ticket to a private tour at 5:15 p.m., and optional participation in the Illumination Parade. Offered exclusively at the Botanical Gardens is a season pass, which allows one adult repeat visits for \$45. Free parking is included with all admission tickets.

A mobile guide, which requires a cell phone for use, provides background information on the displays. The guide is available for \$5 on-site.

Tickets may be purchased in advance on-line at chinalights.org, Boerner Botanical Gardens, and the following Milwaukee County Parks point-of-sale locations: Milwaukee County Parks Headquarters Public Services Office (9480 Watertown Plank Road), Mitchell Park Domes (524 S. Layton Blvd.), Brown Deer Park Golf Course (7625 N. Range Line Road), Currie Golf Course (3535 N. Mayfair Road), Dretzka Golf Course (12020 W. Bradley Road), Grant Golf Course (100 E. Hawthorne Ave.), Greenfield Golf Course (12035 W. Greenfield Ave.), Hansen Golf Course (9800 W. Underwood Creek Parkway), Lincoln Park Golf Course (1000 W. Hampton Ave.), Oakwood Golf Course (3600 W. Oakwood Road), Warnimont Golf Course (5400 S. Lake Drive), and Whitnall Golf Course (6751 S. 92nd St.).

Expedited night-time ticket purchases are available on-site at the outdoor ticket office.

While the displays are magical at night, they are beautiful during the day. Displays may be viewed unlit during the day for the cost of regular Botanical Gardens admission. Patrons may re-enter the Botanical Gardens for China Lights that same day by presenting their daily admission wristband and paying an additional \$10.

Free Parking & Shuttle Service

Free parking is included with all tickets, and free shuttle service is provided from outer lots to the China Lights entrance. Before entering Whitnall Park, visitors to China Lights will see notifications of parking lot availability. As the nine lighted lots near capacity, signage will indicate temporary lot closures. As parking spaces become available, the lots will reopen and the signage will be updated. Signage on the eastern side of the park is located at three 92nd Street intersections, at Rawson, College, and Forest Home avenues. Signage on the western side of the park is located at three Whitnall Park Drive intersections, at College Avenue, 108th Street (Hwy 100), and Lilac Lane. Accessible close-up paved parking nearest the China Lights entrance is available on a first-come, first-served basis to people with disabilities who have state-issued disabled parking or disabled Veteran parking license plates, or the state-issued disabled parking identification card. Drop-off areas are available for Uber and taxis. Motorcoach parking must be reserved by calling 414-525-5603.

China Lights is brought to Milwaukee through the partnership of the Milwaukee County Parks and The Park People of Milwaukee County, with support from Travel Wisconsin. The event is presented by Tri City National Bank and is sponsored by We Energies.

Upcoming Weekend Themes

- Oct. 6–8, Moon Festival Weekend, presented by the Milwaukee Chinese Community Center and OCA–Wisconsin, will feature demonstrations of Chinese folk arts.
- Oct. 13–15, Cultural Weekend will focus on Chinese cultural arts with demonstrations, lectures, and videos.
- Oct 20–22, Closing Weekend will feature giveaways and the closing ceremony.

For more information, visit chinalights.org.

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Background

In 2016, Milwaukee became the first Midwestern city to schedule the unequalled China Lights. Visitors from across the state, the Midwest, and beyond attended the show. At one point, demand for tickets to the show was so great that sales had to be suspended.

As part of China's five-year economic plan, in 2015 the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce developed a campaign with the goal of holding 100 lantern shows in 100 cities worldwide to spread Chinese traditional culture and promote cultural exchange. The custom of lighting lanterns has occurred for thousands of years, and Zigong City now boasts 380 lantern-making companies with 80,000 lantern artisans.