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For immediate release

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## **Chinese Lantern Festival to Return to Milwaukee, Sept. 21–Oct. 21**

MILWAUKEE (June 8, 2018) — Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced today that Milwaukee County Parks and Festival Pro LLC have agreed to bring back the wildly popular China Lights.

China Lights: Panda-mania will return, Sept. 21–Oct. 21, to Milwaukee County’s renowned Boerner Botanical Gardens, 9400 W. Boerner Drive in Hales Corners, WI. Tri City National Bank will be the festival’s presenting sponsor, and for the third year, Tianyu Arts & Culture Inc. will organize the world-class lantern festival.

“This is a spectacular event that brings people together from across Milwaukee County and well beyond. We are thrilled to bring back this partnership with China Lights and our Parks,” Abele said.

Last year China Lights drew visitors from 44 states and the District of Columbia to the botanical gardens in Whitnall Park.

“There’s something magical about the combination of this show at this location,” said Kristen J. Talbott, senior vice president of Tri City National Bank. “Boerner Botanical Gardens is, quite simply, the best venue to see this show. The displays are perfectly integrated into the garden spaces. Once again, we are honored to present this amazing cultural experience.”

China Lights: Panda-mania will feature several panda-habitat lantern displays among the three-foot to three-story handmade exhibits illuminating the nine-acre botanical gardens. Some of the exhibits will be interactive. Also at the festival will be two stages for Asian folk-culture performances, two dining areas, and six food vendors with a variety of Asian and Western menu options.

“While working on the agreement with Tianyu, I visited the Chengdu Panda Base,” said Ralph Garity, the event producer and president of Festival Pro. “It was amazing to see the giant pandas up close. Working with Tianyu, we are able to bring that sense of wonder to Milwaukee—but in the form of lantern displays.”

Festival hours will be 5:30–10 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. The event will be closed Mondays. China Lights admission tickets will be valid any night of the regular 2018 schedule.

On-line ticket sales will open Aug. 8, (8/8) at 10:08 a.m. The date and time allude to the number eight’s association with good fortune in Chinese culture. Sales will include a limited number of tickets to the Exclusive Preview, a one-visit VIP package, and the unlimited-visit Season Pass. Complimentary parking will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis to all event-goers.

For more information, visit [ChinaLights.org](http://ChinaLights.org)

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#### BACKGROUND

For the past three years, Festival Pro LLC, a Milwaukee-based special-events producer, worked with the Sichuan Tianyu Arts & Culture, Inc., in cooperation with Zigong City and the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce, to bring the China Lights lantern festival to Milwaukee

In 2016, Milwaukee became the first Midwestern city to host the unequalled China Lights. In each of the past two years, more than 100,000 visitors attended the show, and, because demand for tickets was so great, sales were temporarily 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.

According to the Zigong Lantern Culture & Industry Group, Zigong City now boasts nearly 600 registered lantern-making companies with 40,000 employees.