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For immediate release

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## **Tai Chi, Kung Fu Demonstrations Added to China Lights Cultural Weekend at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Oct. 12-14 *Sword, Staff Forms Reveal Martial Origins***

MILWAUKEE (Oct. 11, 2018) — Milwaukee area taiji (tai chi) and gongfu (kung fu) practitioner-teachers will demonstrate sword and staff forms and will give audience members the opportunity to learn the basics of taiji at the China Lights: Panda-Mania lantern festival at Boerner Botanical Gardens. Cultural Weekend is sponsored by the Reiman Foundation.

Each night as the sun goes down, the magical glow of 41 larger-than-life sculptural lantern displays illuminate the renowned nine-acre Boerner Botanical Gardens, in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI. The festival, presented by Tri City National Bank, also celebrates Asian folk-culture with professional entertainment sponsored by We Energies, a bustling marketplace, and a wide variety of food and beverage selections. The event runs through Oct. 21, 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.

### **Qigong, Taiji, Gongfu**

The centuries-old martial arts traditions of China will come to the China Lights Cultural Weekend. The gentle art of qigong, used in both healing and martial arts applications, conditions the mind, energy, and body through movement and the breath. Traditional taiji forms in the Yang and Wu styles offer subtle hints at their roots in self-defense, while providing a myriad of recently researched health benefits. Taiji and gongfu sword and staff forms show more directly their martial origins.

Friday, Jim Bayer, founder of Everyday Taijiquan and 2017 gold-medal winner at the International Chinese Martial Arts Championship, will lead demonstrations of Yang Style Taiji Form on the Panda Stage at 7:35 p.m.; Sword Form on the Dragon Stage at 8:10 p.m.; and Introduction to Qigong and Taiji, with audience participation encouraged, in the Reiman Cultural Building at 8:45 p.m.

Saturday, Cindy Martinez, founder of Art of Kung Fu and practitioner-teacher of the martial arts system taught to her by Grandmaster Chian Ho Yin, will lead an introduction to Wu Style Taiji, with audience participation encouraged, in the Cultural Building at 6 p.m.; a demonstration of Shaolin Gongfu Double Sword Form and Double Staff Form on the Dragon Stage at 7:10 p.m. and on the Panda Stage at 7:35 p.m.

Sunday, Patricia Corrigan Culotti, founder of Enhancing Balance and formally certified by Master Benjamin Lo of San Francisco and Master William C. C. Chen of New York, will lead demonstrations of Yang style Sword Form on the Dragon Stage at 7:10 p.m.; Yang Style Taiji Form on the Panda Stage at 7:35 p.m.; and Introduction to Qigong and Yang Style Taiji, with audience participation encouraged, in the Cultural Building at 8 p.m.

#### **Also in the Reiman Cultural Building: Free Tui Na Chair Massage, Traditional Asian Clothing**

Saturday and Sunday from 6–8:30 p.m., three students representing the East-West Healing Arts Institute will perform Tui Na, or Chinese medical massage, as chair massage in the Cultural Building. 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.

Also in the building is a display of traditional Asian clothing. For a photo op, visitors are invited to try on additional small-sized clothing items.

#### **Lantern Displays**

Of course, the stars of the festival are the lantern displays.

Even before reaching the Welcome Gate, visitors encounter one of several giant panda lantern displays. In front of the Education & Visitor Center, guests are amazed to find that the display of a giant panda is constructed almost entirely of thousands of ping-pong balls. This display may be viewed free of charge.

When inside the exhibition, visitors traverse three quarters of a mile along one-way paths to see exhibits focused on Chinese culture, plants, and animals, with each display more magical than the last. Some displays include animation. Sure to be the most-photographed displays are the 150-foot-long blue dragon and the companion phoenix. Meanwhile, staying true to the Panda-Mania theme, the festival boasts a plethora of panda lanterns in the panda habitat area. Here the playful pandas are involved in a variety of activities.

Other show highlights are this year’s interactive displays, designed with children in mind. One display is composed of a series of discs that, when stepped upon, light up to create an illuminated path. Another display features suspended moons that can be used as swings. A rest area accommodating 20 people is located nearby.

Event-goers also have the opportunity to see the inner workings of a lantern. Patrons walk through the “belly” of the Shark Tunnel, where sheer fabric reveals the metal framework and LED lights. To learn more about the construction of the displays, visitors can watch a video in the Cultural Building.

#### **Stage Performances**

Kicking off the entertainment, the Illumination Parade proceeds through the audience at the Dragon Stage at 6:15 p.m. and concludes in time for the first performance of the night.

Friday through Sunday, six shows will be presented by the professional acrobats, martial artists, and dancers from China. Performances begin at about 6:30 p.m. and are staggered between the Dragon and Panda stages. The night's schedule, which also includes the local martial arts presentations, is posted at the Welcome Gate.

Professional acts include foot juggling, plate spinning, Chinese yo-yo, contortion, baji quan (a kind of explosive taiji), folk dance, and mask changing (the ancient art form from the Sichuan opera where performers wear multiple thin masks which they change with the passing of a hand fan).

### **Food & Beverage**

In addition, a wide variety of Asian and Western food options are available, from the Bulgogi Korean Beef Bowl to bratwurst. Vendors at this year's event include MIL-WOK-EE, Gift of Wings Grill, Heavenly Roasted Nuts, T. Best Kettle Corn Co., Tanpopo/Greenfish, Wisconsin Fried Cheese Curds, and Zilli Hospitality Group. Beverages available range from Tsingtao beer and original Ozeki Sake to domestic and premium tap beers and sodas. Vendors service two concessions areas, both with picnic-table seating near the performance stages.

Ralph's Wine & Sake bar, a cozy area with bistro tables, serves beverages only. In addition to serving four styles of wine, the bar offers Ozeki's flavored jelly and sparkling sakes, Sprecher's craft sodas (Lemongrass, Lychee and Asian Pear), and hot beverages.

### **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, which are also for sale. Some of the crafts being demonstrated include inner-bottle painting with a bent brush, rock engraving, and Suzhou embroidery/needle painting. The marketplace is more than a place to shop; it's a cultural experience.

### **Complimentary Parking & Shuttle Service**

Electronic boards surround Whitnall Park, providing parking information in real time, and Park Rangers direct traffic through the park to the parking lots. E-boards on the eastern side of the park are located at three 92<sup>nd</sup> Street intersections—at Rawson, College, and Forest Home avenues. Signage on the western side of the park is located at the intersections of Whitnall Park Drive at Lilac Lane, and College Avenue at Nature Center Drive. Complimentary parking is available in 10 fully lighted lots on a first-come, first-served basis. If a lot is full, it will reopen as spaces become available. Complimentary shuttles are dispatched to serve event-goers parked at the four outer lots. The shuttle service includes an audio introduction to the show.

Preferred close-up paved parking nearest the China Lights entrance is available on a complimentary, 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.

Designated drop-off areas for authorized taxis/uber and motorcoaches are also located near the China Lights entrance. Motorcoach operators must make advance arrangements.

### **Admission/Fees**

China Lights admission tickets are valid any night of the regular 2018 schedule. Ticket prices are the

following: Child, age 5-17, \$12; Adult, age 18-59, \$20; Senior, age 60+, \$12; one-visit individual VIP package, \$30; and unlimited-visit individual Season Pass, \$50. The VIP package includes early entry (5 p.m.), a collectible premium, a tour (5:15 p.m.), participation in the Illumination Parade (6:15 p.m.), VIP seating at the first show of the night, and the mobile guide. The mobile guide, which requires a cell phone for use, provides a cultural perspective on the displays. The guide is also available for \$5 on-site.

E-Tickets, which include priority access at the Welcome Gate, may be purchased in advance on-line at [chinalights.org](http://chinalights.org). The e-ticket can be scanned from a print copy or directly from a phone.

Tickets may also be purchased in person at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Milwaukee County Parks Public Services Office (9480 Watertown Plank Road), Mitchell Park Domes (524 S. Layton Blvd.), and golf courses at Brown Deer Park (7625 N. Range Line Road), Currie Park (3535 N. Mayfair Road), Dretzka Park (12020 W. Bradley Road), Grant Park (100 E. Hawthorne Ave.), Greenfield Park (12035 W. Greenfield Ave.), Hansen Park (9800 W. Underwood Creek Parkway), Lincoln Park (1000 W. Hampton Ave.), Oakwood Park (3600 W. Oakwood Road), Warnimont Park (5400 S. Lake Drive), and Whitnall Park (6751 S. 92nd St.).

Same-night tickets are available on-site at the outdoor ticket office starting at 4 p.m.

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, after 5:30 p.m., by presenting their daily admission wristband and paying an additional \$10.

For more information, call 888-733-1888 or 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.

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.