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For immediate release

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NOTE:

Media interviews for a behind-the-scenes look are available with the Boerner Botanical Gardens Director and a China Lights representative/translator. Please call ahead.

## Construction of China Lights' Porcelain Tower Nears Midway Point at Boerner Botanical Gardens

MILWAUKEE (Aug. 30, 2017) – Rather than imagining more than 60,000 porcelain cups, bowls, bottles, and spoons being knotted and wired together to create a nearly 50-foot tall Chinese pagoda, visitors are being welcomed to see the construction of the Porcelain Tower, first-hand, at the Boerner Botanical Gardens, for free.

For about 30 days before arriving in Milwaukee, three artisans in China were hand-tying the porcelain pieces together in preparation for one of the major displays in the China Lights lantern festival. From Sept. 22–Oct.22, the festival presented by Tri City National Bank will feature 50 larger-than-life sculptural displays illuminating 10 acres of Milwaukee's renowned Boerner Botanical Gardens, in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI.

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Since arriving at the Botanical Gardens in early August, the three artisans have been joined by six structural artists who weld the frames for the pre-tied components. The artisans are continuing to tie the components and wire them to the metal frames. An additional 15 artists are working on the other displays.

Sure to be a showstopper, the Porcelain Tower is inspired by the Manfeilong Pagoda in the Yunan Province. The pagoda consists of a central stupa, or dome-like structure, surrounded by eight smaller stupas and is dedicated to Hinayana Buddhism. At the base of each of the surrounding stupas is a niche containing a statue of the Buddha. Topping each stupa is a gourd-shaped spire. In the Porcelain Tower both the Buddha statues and the spires are made using the same techniques employed in the other lantern components in the show and are lit from within. External lighting adds an overall glow to the display.

Most display components use techniques drawn from the talents of four teams. Members of the artist team draw the full-size lantern shapes on the floor or on several sheets of plywood. Using the outlines as a guide, the welding team forms the metal to create three-dimensional forms. Next, the team of electricians and lighting artists wire various types and colors of LED lights inside the lantern frames. To achieve the desired effects, this team must consider the fabric color that the gluing team will use to cover the framework. When the gluing team has completed the application of fabric, the artists return to hand-paint the finishing touches to bring the sculptures to life.

As the weather cooperates, displays are being added to the Botanical Gardens. Children participating in the Dragon Dance, elephants, peace doves, and tea cups are among the displays that visitors may see springing up in the various garden spaces. Installation of some of the displays may be blocked from view for public safety.

The magical glow of the lantern displays is only part of China Lights. The festival also celebrates Asian culture with professional entertainment on two stages, cultural exhibits and demonstrations, a bustling marketplace, and Asian and Western food in two concessions areas.

Visitors may view the construction of the Porcelain Tower, located in front of the Education & Visitor Center, daily from 8 a.m. until dusk, for free through Sept. 18. Visitors may also view the completed tower for free from 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Sept. 19–Oct 22. Evening viewing (after 4 p.m.) during the run of China Lights is available only to ticket-holders.

Regular daytime admission to the Botanical Gardens, until dusk through Sept. 18 and until 4 p.m. during China Lights, is \$5.50 for adults age 18 and up; \$4.50 for students of any age with ID, Milwaukee County seniors age 60 and up with ID, and people with disabilities; and \$3.50 for youths age 6–17.

China Lights admission is by ticket only. Tickets will be valid any night of the regular 2017 schedule (Tuesday through Sunday, from 5:30–10 p.m.).

China Lights 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 will be 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 will be a season pass, which allows one adult repeat visits for \$45. Free parking and shuttle service is included with all admission tickets.

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

Tickets may be purchased in advance on-line at [chinalights.org](http://chinalights.org), Boerner Botanical Gardens, and the following Milwaukee County Parks point-of-sale locations: Milwaukee County Parks 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 will be available on-site at the outdoor ticket office.

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.

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

### **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.

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