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For immediate release

International Agreement to Bring Chinese Lantern Festival to Boerner Botanical Gardens in October

Milwaukee, WI (July 19, 2016) — Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele announced today that Festival Pro LLC, on behalf of Milwaukee County Parks and the Park People of Milwaukee County, has entered into an agreement with the Sichuan Tianyu Culture Communication Co., Ltd. in cooperation with Zigong City and the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce to bring a world-class lantern festival to Boerner Botanical Gardens as a true cultural trade mission.

On May 29, during the China International Service Trade Fair in Beijing, Milwaukee became the first Midwestern city to schedule the unequalled China Lights, a festival featuring brilliantly lighted, giant-sized lanterns along with Chinese folk-culture activities and entertainment.

Throughout October, the festival's 40 giant displays will illuminate nine acres of the Botanical Gardens. Making up the themed displays will be more than 1,000 components using state-of-the-art LEDs and animation.

As part of China's five-year economic plan, the Sichuan Provincial Department of Commerce developed a campaign with the goal of holding 100 light 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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Milwaukee-based business Festival Pro has successfully produced numerous special events, including the popular air show at the lakefront.

“We wanted to bring something spectacular to Milwaukee,” said Ralph Garrity, president of Festival Pro. “With the air show on hiatus this year, we needed another great family event. The China Lights Festivals that have taken place in other cities have had great reviews.”

One Trip Advisor reviewer of the recent New Orleans show wrote, “I was not sure what to expect, but it was a reasonably priced attraction to take the family to for an evening. I was shocked at the artistry and scale of the lantern exhibits. Hundreds of handmade, brilliantly lighted Chinese lantern displays. . . Everything was much better than our group expected—it was the best value family attraction of 2016 that we experienced.”

To ensure successful promotion of the event beyond the local market, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Travel Wisconsin, has approved this new event for the maximum grant funding available through the Joint Effort Marketing Grant Program. The Department will reimburse up to 75% of the project’s first year promotional costs or \$39,550. Remaining advertising dollars will come from sponsors. Because China Lights is seen as a signature event, it will be promoted regionally.

A press conference, including a big-check presentation by Travel Wisconsin, will be followed by the opening of on-line ticket sales. The press event is scheduled at Boerner Botanical Gardens, 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. Boerner Botanical Gardens is located at 9400 W. Boerner Drive.

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