**For Immediate Release**

October 25, 2019

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**Kansas Tourism Professionals Receive Awards**

*Awards presented at annual Kansas tourism industry meeting*

**Topeka, Kan. –**Kansas tourism professionals presented several awards at the 2019 Kansas Tourism Conference awards banquet held October 23, 2019 at the Kansas Star Casino in Mulvane, Kan. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) presented the following awards:

* **Governor’s Tourism Award** - Established in 1983 to recognize outstanding contributions by individuals or organizations to the Tourism Industry, the Governor's Award encourages others to strive for excellence. The award demonstrates cooperation, sustainability, quality and accountability. Paul Bahnmaier, president of the Lecompton Historical Society, was presented this prestigious award. Via video, Governor Laura Kelly stated that Paul’s passion for tourism and Kansas is beyond compare – every community should have someone so dedicated.
* **Kansas’ Finest Awards**– The Kansas’ Finest award recognizes and honors advocates who promote the state’s attributes and maintain an abiding love for the sunflower state, exhibiting passion, perseverance, and pride in promoting destinations with statewide significance and national or international relevance. This year it was awarded to Kenneth & Shirley McClintock, Council Grove, Historians, Preservationists & Restaurateurs; and Jonathan Adams, Iola, Photographer and Kansas Influencer.

"These awards highlight the vital role of dedicated individuals and organizations in growing the tourism industry in Kansas. Through their partnership, Kansas tourism will continue to be a significant part of the state's economy.  A recent economic impact survey indicates tourism has grown to an $11.3 billion industry in Kansas, one of the fastest growing industries in Kansas." said Bridgette Jobe, KDWPT Tourism Director.

The Travel Industry Association of Kansas (TIAK) also recognized its membership’s top marketing talent. TIAK Marketing Awards focus on overall marketing initiatives and recognize state-level winners only.

* **People’s Choice: Greensburg Tourism**
* **Best in Show: Wild West Country**
* **Visitors Guide (designed in-house):** *Council Grove/Morris County Chamber of Commerce & Tourism* won in the small budget category. *Merriam Visitors Bureau* received bragging rights in the medium budget category and the large budget winner was the *Kansas State Fair*.
* **Visitors Guide (outsourced):** *Emporia Convention & Visitors Bureau* received the medium budget trophy and *Visit Kansas City Kansas* won in the large budget.
* **Online Media:** *Seneca Area Chamber & Downtown Impact* was recognized in the small budget category. The medium budget winner was *Fort Scott Convention and Visitors Bureau* and *Visit Kansas City Kansas* received recognition in the large budget category.
* **Integrated Campaign:** *Emporia Convention & Visitors Bureau* received the medium budget win and *eXplore Lawrence* received large budget honors.
* **Print Media:** *Wild West Country* won in the small budget category. The medium budget winner was *Downtown Hays Development Corporation* and *Visit Kansas City Kansas* received the large budget win.
* **Community Awareness**: *Greensburg Tourism* was honored in the small budget category. *Downtown Hays Development Corporation* won in the medium budget category and *the Kansas Turnpike Authority* received the large budget category win.

“The travel industry plays a significant role in enhancing the Kansas economy. These awards are examples of the superb efforts, from all regions of the state, that go into marketing Kansas as a quality visitor destination.”  said TIAK president Stacy Barnes.

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The *Tourism Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism* is charged with encouraging the public to visit and travel in Kansas by promoting recreational, historic and natural advantages of the state and its facilities. The Division focuses on measurable goals in its marketing and promotional efforts, which include increasing domestic and international inquiries through advertising and public relations efforts and converting those inquiries into visits to Kansas, increasing group tour visits, and generating positive public perceptions about the state as a travel destination.For more information, visit [TravelKS.com](http://travelks.com/).

The *Travel Industry Association of Kansas* is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and development of travel and tourism in Kansas. For more information, visit [www.tiak.org](http://www.tiak.org/).