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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Visit Charlotte Partner of the Year Award Winners Announced

Outstanding organizations and individuals in the hospitality and tourism industry recognized

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (Jan. 21, 2015) – Visit Charlotte announced the winners of the Partner of the Year Awards on Jan. 21 at an awards breakfast and ceremony at the Charlotte Convention Center. Charlotte's top hospitality and tourism professionals were in attendance to recognize the front-line organizations and individuals that directly impact tourism in the Charlotte region. Dr. Scott Allen Jarrett, Director of Choruses and Assistant Conductor for the Charlotte Symphony, gave the keynote speech.

Visit Charlotte Director of Partnership Kamin Brennan described the event as a special time to celebrate the champions of the local tourism industry. "Our partners are often the first to interact with visitors to Charlotte. It is important to recognize and celebrate them for their exceptional effort, collaboration and customer service throughout the year," Brennan said. "With the help of these outstanding partners, we are able to continue to provide a positive experience for visitors and develop the Charlotte region as a thriving visitor destination."

The hospitality and tourism industry in the Charlotte region makes an impact that generates a critical \$6 billion in direct tourism spending, employs more than 46,500 in Mecklenburg County and saves each Mecklenburg resident an average of \$328 in taxes per year.

CRVA CEO Tom Murray was also in attendance at the awards ceremony and recognized local champions in the community who have collaborated with Visit Charlotte to bring significant meetings and conventions to the city, which also boosts the economic impact of tourism in Charlotte. Local champions recognized include ACN, Inc. Director of Events & Corporate Relations Lisa Krass, who was instrumental in bringing ACN's training meetings to Charlotte, which have resulted in nine events since 2009; Charlotte Fire Department Chief Kevin Gordon, who helped secure a two-year rotation of the NC State Firemen's Association's annual meeting; and Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department Director Jim Garges and Deputy Director Michael Kirschman, who helped secure the 2014 National Recreation & Park Association Conference in Charlotte this past October.

Since 2007, Visit Charlotte has held the Partner of the Year Awards to celebrate exceptional contributions to Charlotte tourism. Winners were nominated by Visit Charlotte employees and partners. Award categories included Attraction, Restaurant, Full Service Hotel, Select Service Hotel, Nightlife & Entertainment, Retail and Service. Individual honors given at the

event included the Hospitality Unsung Hero Award, Outstanding Ambassador Award and Hospitality Professional of the Year Award.

The 2014 Partner of the Year award winners are:

Attraction of the Year: **Carowinds**

Restaurant of the Year: **The King's Kitchen**

Full Service Hotel of the Year: **The Westin Charlotte**

Select Service Hotel of the Year: **Courtyard by Marriott Charlotte Billy Graham Parkway**

Nightlife & Entertainment Venue of the Year: **The Charlotte Comedy Zone**

Retail Establishment of the Year: **Tastebuds Popcorn**

Service Company of the Year: **Feast Food Tours & Culinary Events**

Hospitality Unsung Hero Award: **Todd Petty, Director of Engineering at Aloft Charlotte Ballantyne**

Outstanding Ambassador Award: **Ermiyas Misfin, Lead Offsite Chauffeur at SilverFox Chauffeured Transportation**

Hospitality Professional of the Year: **Stephanie Atkisson, Area VP of Sales & Marketing at HP Hotels**

About Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA)

The Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA) works to deliver experiences that uniquely enrich the lives of our visitors and residents. Through leadership in destination development, marketing and venue management expertise, the CRVA leads efforts to maximize the region's economic potential through visitor spending, creating jobs and opportunities for the community. Brands supported by the CRVA include the Charlotte Convention Center, Time Warner Cable Arena, Bojangles' Coliseum, Ovens Auditorium, NASCAR Hall of Fame and Visit Charlotte in conjunction with the region's destination marketing brand, 'Charlotte's got a lot.' www.charlottesgotalot.com

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