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For Immediate Release

VISIT MANKATO RECOGNIZES AMBASSADORS TO MANKATO

MANKATO, MN – As a special part of the 31st annual National Travel and Tourism Week held nationwide May 3 to 11, Visit Mankato will recognize four outstanding ambassadors of Mankato for making our visitors feel welcome.

- Monica Stephanie, the General Manager of Microtel Inn & Suites by Wyndham will be awarded the **Hotel Travel and Tourism Award** for acting as a safe haven during tumultuous winter weather by offering a “freeze over” rate for when travel is not advised. Stephanie is the go-to for industry news and coordinates regular hotel meetings.
- Julie Brewer, Visitor Experience Manager of the Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota, will be awarded the **Attraction Travel and Tourism Award** for working behind the scenes with staff to ensure positive visitor experience is the top priority for the Southern Minnesota Children’s Museum.
- Terry and Karen Johnson of Scheel’s will be awarded the **Retail Travel and Tourism Award** for their dedication to serving runners through their great customer service at Scheel’s in the Shoes and Women’s Athletic departments, through their involvement with the Mankato Marathon, and for being so active in the Mankato running community.
- JoRae Galli Storm, the owner of Dairy Queen West and The Pita Pit, will be awarded the **Restaurant Travel and Tourism Award** for her dedication to her employees and the visitors of her restaurants. Galli Storm can be found working along-side her employees behind the counter of one of her restaurants seven days a week. She represents the community of Mankato with a smile on her face and a conversation ready for any visitor she meets.

The award winners will be honored at the Visit Mankato 30th Anniversary Celebration from 4 to 6 p.m. on May 8 at the Mankato Place Mall. Visit Mankato is celebrating 30 years of promoting Mankato as an ideal destination for conventions, tournaments and leisure travel.

“It’s important for people in our community to make our visitors feel welcome,” said Anna Thill, President of Visit Mankato. “We want them to have a great time in Mankato and our local citizens know best how to do that.”

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The number one reason visitors come to our community isn't our amazing trails, our unbelievable wellness events or our exciting music scene. The reason most of our visitors come to Mankato is to visit friends and family. That makes the citizens of Greater Mankato our most important ambassadors. Citizens can learn more about what to do with friends and family while they are visiting at www.visitmankatomn.com where they will find a wealth of information about the community.

In 1983, U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution establishing National Travel and Tourism Week (NTTW). In support, President Ronald Reagan signed a Presidential Proclamation urging citizens to observe the week with "appropriate ceremonies and activities." The tradition is celebrated the first full week of May and paves the way for people to gather nationwide to spread the word of travel.

More than thirty years later, travel is more relevant than ever as a driver of the U.S. economy – the industry creates jobs at a faster pace than the rest of the economy.

"Travel is one of the healthiest sectors in terms of job creation and hiring, employing one out of every nine Americans," said Thill. In Minnesota, the leisure and hospitality industry accounts for 11% of the state's total private sector jobs. In Blue Earth County alone, travel and tourism supports over 3,800 employees in hotel, restaurant, attraction, transportation and retail jobs.

Without even realizing it, travelers drive revenue into a broad spectrum of businesses and local establishments, including food services, public transportation, lodging and retail. Minnesota travelers spend more than \$34 million a day which accounts for 17% of the state's sales tax revenue. The tax revenue generated reduces the amount of money each U.S. household would pay in taxes by \$1,093.

For more information about Mankato as a travel destination visit www.visitmankatomn.com.

About Visit Mankato:

Visit Mankato, LLC, the local Convention & Visitors Bureau, is a Limited Liability Corporation of Greater Mankato Growth, Inc. Visit Mankato leads the development of the visitor economy in Mankato by actively promoting Mankato as a premier destination for conventions, tournaments and tourism. These activities bring a steady flow of visitors and business activity to Mankato that benefits local residents and future visitors. The work of Visit Mankato helps strengthen the hospitality industry which provides jobs, a diverse tax base and amenities for everyone to enjoy. www.visitmankatomn.com