



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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33rd Annual KC St. Patrick's Day Parade Set for March 17

We may be in the depths of winter but Kansas City's largest single-day event of the year is just five weeks away! On March 17 the 33rd annual St. Patrick's Day Parade will kickoff by Union Station in what has become a Kansas City cultural tradition and one in which all participants can, for at least a day, call themselves "Irish."

The parade participants step off at 11 a.m. from Pershing and Main Streets, proceed east on Pershing then north on Grand Boulevard, completing the new one-mile parade route at 15th Street. The official Judging/VIP stand will be located at the northeast corner of Washington Park, on the west side of Grand.

The theme for the parade is "An Irish Tribute to Walt Disney," honoring one of Kansas City's greatest talents. This year's parade will feature almost 150 entries and more than 3,000 marchers. Past parades blessed with good weather have attracted as many as 200,000 spectators gathered to watch the elaborate floats, bands, drill teams, celebrities and other groups turn the parade route into a sea of emerald green. Parade participants represent a wide spectrum of greater Kansas City and beyond, from families, neighborhoods, businesses and trade unions to cultural and civic organizations, churches, clubs and schools; all from every age, ethnicity and walk of life.

What's New

The St. Patrick's Day Parade has successfully evolved over the years into one of the largest in the nation. Organizers have continually strived to make it better. This year the parade will build on the significant improvements initiated last year in order to make the 2006 edition the most enjoyable ever for ALL who come to experience this unique Kansas City institution.

Safety and environmental friendliness are the continued focus of these changes. Those who've experienced the 2005 parade should note that this year's edition will start an hour later while retaining the shorter, more open route that will result in an event duration of two hours. The Parade Committee is sustaining its heavy investment in barricades that will be deployed along the entire route to ensure a safe experience for both participants and spectators. More than 500 trash boxes will also be deployed and retrieved by volunteers, resulting in a rapid and effective cleanup.

As with all large outdoor public events in Kansas City, the deployment of City and State police and other public safety personnel such as liquor control will continue to provide a visible and effective deterrent to those whose exuberant behavior may violate the law. In addition, all vendors will be required to obtain permits from Kansas City and the Parade Committee if they wish to do business along the parade route. This requirement will further ensure public safety and overall enjoyment on parade day.

New for the 2006 parade is the opportunity for companies and civic organizations to sponsor giant Irish-themed balloons, much like those featured in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The balloon entries will be specially featured during the KMBC-TV broadcast of the parade and are guaranteed to be a crowd favorite. Go to www.kcirisishparade.com and sponsor a balloon today!

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The Parade Committee has also teamed up this year with the Thank You Walt Disney organization and Radio Disney to help honor one of Kansas City's most famous citizens. As a result, efforts are underway to involve famous Disney characters in the parade as a tie-in to this year's theme.

"Like last year, we are keeping the emphasis on providing a safe, fun and family-friendly environment for all who come to enjoy the parade," said Parade President and Co-Chair Mary Nestel. "We think the changes we've made in 2005 and this year will enhance the parade experience for everyone, while retaining the traditional festive environment of the many parades preceding this one."

To help fund the most significant change - the barricades - the Parade Committee is continuing the "Adopt A Barricade" campaign launched last year. Those who monetarily "adopt" a barricade for \$100 will have a message of their choice placed on a barricade, such as the name of their group or organization or, as many have requested, a memorial to a departed loved one.

Kickoff Luncheon

Preceding the parade on March 6 will be the St. Patrick's Day Kickoff Luncheon at the Muehlebach Hotel, 200 West 12th Street. The event will begin at 11 a.m. with a silent auction and social hour, followed by a noon lunch and live entertainment. There will be an awards presentation, including the introduction of the Parade Grand Marshall, Jody Watson, who will also open the parade for the 20th year as the lead, single bagpiper. Mr. Watson is a great supporter of all things Irish in Kansas City and all who are associated with the parade are proud to have him as Grand Marshall. Also being introduced as the 2006 Mike Murphy Honorary Irishman of the Year will be John McDonald, president and founder of Boulevard Brewery. This unique award was created last year as a "tip 'o the hat" to the man who was instrumental in creating and supporting Kansas City's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Mr. Murphy, who is retiring from riding in the parade, will present the award. Tickets to the luncheon are \$20 and should be purchased by February 28. Donations for the silent auction are due by March 1.

On Parade Day

Young patients at Children's Mercy Hospital will be the beneficiaries of the annual heart warming effort by volunteers, including KC's favorite leprechaun, Brogeen Malarkey. The volunteers will visit the children after the parade, spreading St. Patrick's Day cheer with clowns, mascots and gifts, providing fond and loving memories for the kids.

All information on the Kickoff Luncheon, Parade, Children's Mercy Hospital and the attendant activities is available on the Parade website, www.kcirishparade.com. This includes deadlines, procedures for participation, forms and relevant points of contact. You may also contact the Parade Co-Chairs by calling (816) 931-7373 or through email at info@kcirishparrade.com.

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