



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **The 2006 KC St. Pat's Day Parade Will Feature Many Special Guests**

The 33<sup>rd</sup> annual St. Patrick's Day Parade is just around the corner, promising another colorful flood of emerald green moving north along the Grand Boulevard parade route to celebrate the Feast of St. Patrick's, March 17. This year's parade starts at 11 a.m. and will feature nationally known celebrities, all of whom Kansas City can call its own.

The theme for this year's parade is "An Irish Tribute to Walt Disney," honoring one of the greatest talents in Kansas City history. Coming straight from Disney World to represent Walt at the parade will be his most famous creation, Mickey Mouse. Through the generous contributions of AT&T and other parade sponsors, it will be a homecoming of sorts for the mouse who was created long ago on a drawing board in the animator's 31<sup>st</sup> Street Kansas City studio.

The Parade Committee is also very pleased to announce today that another loved and cherished member of our community, Negro Leagues and Major Leagues great Buck O'Neil, will ride in the parade as the Mike Murphy Honorary Irishman of the Year. Also participating will be Tonganoxie, KS native Danni Boatwright, the most recent winner of the highly popular television series, "Survivor."

Buck, Mickey and Danni will be a part of a parade featuring almost 150 entries and more than 3,000 marchers. The parade will kickoff by Union Station and follow last year's revised route beginning at Pershing and Main Streets, proceeding east on Pershing then north on Grand Boulevard to 15<sup>th</sup> Street. With good weather, the Friday event could challenge attendance records of the past when as many as 200,000 revelers gathered to watch the elaborate floats, Macy's parade-style balloons, bands, drill teams, celebrities, equestrian teams and other groups.

### **Building on the 2005 Improvements**

The St. Patrick's Day Parade remains one of the nation's largest and has become so through the year-round efforts of its organizers and army of volunteers. This year the parade will build on the significant changes incorporated in 2005, all of which are designed to make the current edition the most enjoyable ever for ALL who come to experience this unique Kansas City institution.

New for 2006 will be giant Irish-themed balloons, much like those featured in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Sponsorship opportunities remain for one of these crowd-pleasing balloons.

Also new is the requirement for all vendors to have in their possession both a Kansas City permit and a St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee permit in order to sell any merchandise or food along the parade route. This will further enhance the parade experience for all who attend. The deadline for permit applications is March 7. Go to [www.kcirishtarade.com](http://www.kcirishtarade.com) for more details and to download appropriate forms.

Safety, fun and environmental friendliness remain the focus of recent changes. Those who have experienced earlier parades should note the shorter, more open route that will result in an event duration of approximately two hours. The most significant and successful change of the '05 parade – barricades along the entire route - will again be employed. The Parade Committee arranged for the barricades at great expense, since they have proven to be a key component in providing a safe experience for both participants and the hundreds of thousands of spectators.

Like 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 provide a visible and effective deterrent to anyone whose

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exuberant behavior violates the law. Parade co-chair Mary Nestel wants all who either participate in or come to watch the parade to understand and appreciate the improvements.

“We’ve expanded our efforts to ensure a safe, fun and family-friendly environment for all who come to enjoy the parade,” Nestel said. “Last year proved that Kansas City can put on an event that brings thousands of people together for a really good – and safe - time. But keep in mind that the barricades and other safety improvements will restrict some street access so do come early if you want to get to your favorite spot.”

### **Kickoff Luncheon – Another Tradition**

Preceding the parade on March 6 will be the well-known St. Patrick’s Day Kickoff Luncheon at the Muehlebach Hotel, 200 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The event will begin at 11 a.m. with a silent auction and social hour, followed by a noon lunch and live entertainment. Proceeds from the auction will support the parade production expenses.

The luncheon will feature an awards presentation that will formally introduce Buck O’Neil as the Mike Murphy Honorary Irishman of the Year. In addition, the presentation will toast this year’s Parade Grand Marshal, Jody Watson, who will also open the parade for the 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Before & After the Parade**

Runners and walkers are encouraged to jump start the St. Patrick’s Day holiday on March 11 by participating in the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Westport St. Patrick’s Day Run, benefiting Redemptorist Catholic church. Go to the parade website or <http://www.sportkc.org/events/St.PatsRun2006.htm> for details.

Following the parade, the St. Patrick’s Day Brogeen’s Brigade will continue its tradition of visiting young patients at Children’s Mercy Hospital. The kids are the beneficiaries of this heart warming effort by parade volunteers and participants who visit the children after the parade, spreading St. Patrick’s Day cheer with clowns, mascots, Irish dancers and gifts that provide fond and loving memories for the little ones. In addition, Mickey Mouse will visit the kids at an area hospital to be named following the parade. All are invited to help by contacting the Parade Committee.

### **Adopt a Barricade**

To help fund one of the more significant changes, the Parade Committee invites the public to “Adopt a Barricade.” For a donation of \$100, contributors will have a unique opportunity to create a message for thousands to see. The message may range from advertising a business or saying hello to friends, to remembering departed family; all in support of parade improvements. Time is short on this golden opportunity, so contact the Parade Committee now!

For more information on the Kickoff Luncheon, Parade, Westport St. Patrick’s Day Run, Children’s Mercy Hospital and the attendant activities, call (816) 931-7373, contact the Parade’s Internet web site at [www.kcirishparade.com](http://www.kcirishparade.com) or address email to [info@kcirishparade.com](mailto:info@kcirishparade.com).

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