



Wichita Festivals, Inc.
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GARY GIBBS ANNOUNCED AS ADMIRAL WINDWAGON SMITH XXXV

WICHITA, Kansas – Wichita Festivals, Inc. (WFI), a non-profit corporation with the purpose of creating diverse community celebrations, announced today that Gary Gibbs, a 10-year Wichita River Festival® operations committee volunteer and retired manager of Belger Cartage Service was chosen as Admiral Windwagon Smith XXXV at a press conference, March 8, in downtown Wichita, Kansas.

“In its 35th year, being chosen Admiral Windwagon Smith is an honor for dedicated volunteers and sponsors,” said Janet Wright, President/CEO of Wichita Festivals, Inc. “We are excited to have Gary Gibbs serve in this role in honor of his dedication and hard work as a member of the operations committee.”

Members of the operations committee, which includes over 50 volunteers that help set-up the Festival and coordinate events, attended the press conference to celebrate one of their own becoming Admiral Windwagon Smith. Committee members tried to move a food court ticket booth to no avail had to call a ‘mover & shaker’ to handle the task with a forklift. Behind the wheel, Gibbs took care of the task with ease; he has moved many food court ticket booths in 10 years on the committee as well as other heavy equipment.

Gibbs has been a proud supporter of Riverfest since the mid 1970’s, both as a sponsor representative and volunteer. “It’s truly an honor to be selected and I was both shocked and thrilled to be asked,” said Gary. “Riverfest is still the best thing in town.”

Gary first began assisting with festival setup in the mid-1970’s when the company he worked for, Belger Cartage Service, was asked to provide a flatbed trailer for a concert stage. In 1977, he became manager for Belger Cartage Service and provided even more help to Riverfest. In 1998, Gary retired from Belger, after 37 years of service. That same year he was asked to become an “official” member of the Riverfest Operations Committee and became a “mover & shaker”.

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His experience with forklifts, flatbed trailers and moving heavy items has been invaluable to the Festival for over 30 years.

Gibbs' community involvement goes beyond the festivals WFI produces. He has been involved as a board member, president or general member of the following organizations: Wichita Executive Association; Association of General Contractors of Kansas; Wichita Motor Carriers Association; and president and founder of Haysville United Methodist Church Men's Club.

In 1973, then festival director Pat Brooks decided the festival needed an official ambassador to serve as a representative of the festival to the public. This was the beginning of the tradition of Admiral Windwagon Smith, with John Bell being the first community representative selected to fill the role in 1974. Thirty-five years later every person selected to serve in this capacity has been a dedicated festival volunteer or sponsor. Gibbs has personally known a majority of the Admirals selected over that time.

Many past Admirals were at the press conference. Photos showcasing 35 years of Admiral Windwagon Smith were on display, as well as a banner adorning the Windwagon highlighting its 35th anniversary. The official piping aboard ceremony by the Wichita Wagonmasters took place after Gibbs received the official red coat, hat and sword of the Admiral.

The Admiral will be visible from now through the Festival, visiting children's hospitals, speaking on behalf of Riverfest at many Wichita civic organizations and of course at Riverfest events. Gibbs will also be seen behind the wheel of large vehicles and forklifts moving big items during festival set-up.

For more information on volunteering for Riverfest contact Kim Wickliffe, volunteer manager, at 316-267-2817 ext 11, or email kimw@wichitafestivals.com. To see a complete list of volunteer opportunities visit the WFI Web site at www.wichitafestivals.com/volunteer.html. Volunteers are needed in the following areas during the Festival: food court ticket sales, buttons sales and merchandise associates.

Riverfest buttons are now available for order at www.wichitafestivals.com, and will be on sale in retail locations starting April 7.

Riverfest 2008 will take place May 9-17, in Downtown Wichita.

2008 WFI Official Sponsors: AirTran Airways, Broadview Hotel, Bud Light, Don Hattan Chevrolet, Fahnestock Plumbing, HVAC & Electric, Jajo Inc., Jet Digital Printing & Signs, Johnson Controls, Metro Courier, NetVision Technologies, Pepsi, Prairie Land Partners (formerly Conrady Western) and Van Horn Promotion & Marketing.

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For more information about Wichita Festivals, Inc. or Riverfest, please contact Susan Burchill, Director of Marketing at (316) 267-2817, ext. 25 or at susan@wichitafestivals.com.

Wichita Festivals, Inc. is a non-profit corporation with the purpose of creating diverse community celebration within the Wichita community. The primary event produced by Wichita Festivals, Inc. is Riverfest.

The nomination process for Admiral Windwagon Smith begins with volunteer committee's, board members, Wichita Wagonmasters and past Admiral's submitting nominations. The WFI board reviews each candidate nominated, based on the qualifications outlined for the position, and then submit their recommendations to the past Admirals for final selection of the new Admiral.

Creating an economic impact of approximately \$26 million, Riverfest annually attracts more than 350,000 attendees. The Festival has become one of the top special events in Kansas and was recognized in 2006 as one of the top 100 events in the United States by the American Bus Association.

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