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Longtime Downtown Hartford Ambassador Program The Hartford Guides To Cease Operations Effective July 1

Non-Profit Organization Has Served Downtown District Since 1991, Leaving an Unparalleled Legacy of Service and Hospitality for Businesses and Visitors Alike

Hartford, Conn., May 17, 2024 – The Hartford Guides, the Downtown Hartford ambassador program that for the past 32-plus years has made the Downtown District “a friendlier place” where visitors and business owners alike could feel safe, secure, welcome and valued, will cease operations as of July 1.

The decision by the nonprofit organization’s board of directors to dissolve The Hartford Guides, Inc., was spurred by projections of dwindling resources along with ever-increasing operating expenses.

“This decision by our board was made due to circumstances beyond our control and was not arrived at easily,” said Guides Chief Executive Officer David Harris, a security industry veteran who has served the organization since 2016 when Guides founder and long-time CEO Austin Jordan retired and assumed an advisory capacity with the organization. “The board was simply unable to discern a viable way forward.

“It is sad to see The Guides come to an end, but we arrive at this decision knowing that we did phenomenal things for the City of Hartford. It has been a good ride.”

Added Jordan, a U.S. Navy veteran who for decades was the heart, soul and face of the organization as it evolved and adapted to changing City administrations, downtown dynamics and economic challenges, “The Hartford Guides has been an instrumental part of what has made Downtown Hartford a special place for so many years. Often unseen but always there when a friendly, helping hand was needed, we have taken great pride over the years in our ability to evolve to changing community needs, dynamics and even city politics, always keeping our focus on the customer and fulfilling our responsibilities with professionalism and unparalleled expertise.”

Mike Kuziak, Chief Operating Officer of LAZ Parking, the largest privately held parking company in America, is also saddened to see The Hartford Guides service to the community come to an end.

“The Hartford Guides set an unparalleled standard for on-street hospitality,” said Kuziak. “The Guides made a lasting contribution to Hartford and the region and we are sorry to see them go.”

The concept of a Downtown Hartford street-level ambassador program first emerged in 1989. After experiencing highly visible Guides programs operating in several cities in the United States and Canada, members of the local business community concluded that such a program would benefit Hartford. A Hartford Guides Steering Group was formed, which then created a non-profit corporation. With further collaboration and assistance from the corporate sector, small business community and the City of Hartford, The Hartford Guides, Inc., was founded in April 1991 and began operations in September.

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Over the decades The Guides has provided a variety of services to the Downtown District, including regular foot patrols; comprehensive information and assistance; the Hartford Guides Hospitality Van, a “light service” motorist assist service; workplace escorts for workers in the Downtown District; daily reviews and reporting of cleanliness, graffiti, vandalism, property damage, etc.; emergency first aid and CPR; direct links to and crime prevention programs with the Hartford police; staffing and operation of the Greater Hartford Welcome Center in partnership with other organizations; bilingual translation services for Spanish-speaking clients; contract services such as historic downtown walking tours; and support services for major Downtown District events.

In 2001 The Guides became licensed by the State of Connecticut as an incorporated contract security service and, in addition to its traditional street services, entered into its first contracts to provide security services at various Downtown District parking facilities. From 2004-2007, The Guides played an instrumental part in the formation of the Hartford Business Improvement District, and ultimately contracted with the newly established entity to provide, from 2007-2014, mobile and foot security patrols throughout the District.

The formation of the Hartford Business Improvement District jumpstarted a strategic shift in direction by The Guides, in 2007, from a traditional nonprofit model to a nonprofit entrepreneurial model, with an emphasis on providing contract security and hospitality services to individuals and organizations. This has been The Guides’ model for the past 17 years.

Concluded Jordan, “It has been an honor and privilege for me, personally, and for all of those associated with The Guides over the years, including our outstanding staff members and all those who have selflessly served on our board, to serve the wonderful City of Hartford for the past 32 years.”

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