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MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES RECORD TOURISM PERFORMANCE

Chicago On Track to Achieve Goal of 55 Million Visitors Annually; New Long Term Commitment from Major Institute of Food Technologists Convention Demonstrates Strength of City's Meetings Industry

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced Chicago is on track to reach the goal of 55 million visitors annually at the end of this year - three years early. Chicago has been setting tourism records every year since 2012. Last year, more than 54 million people from all over the world visited the city. To build on that progress, one of the world's leading food science organizations is making an unprecedented ten-year commitment to hold its annual global meetings in Chicago.

"Tourism creates jobs and drives economic growth that reaches every neighborhood in Chicago," Mayor Emanuel said. "The long-term commitment by the Institute of Food Technologists will help ensure we continue to break records and drive investment in the city of Chicago."

Two years ago, Mayor Emanuel set a goal of 55 million visitors annually by 2020. To reach that goal Chicago will need to see approximately 2.3 percent growth. Through the end of the second quarter 2017, visitation is up 3.2 percent. If current trends continue, the 55 million-visitor goal will be eclipsed by the end of next month.

Chicago's visitation success is driven, in part, by the organizations from all over the world that choose to meet here. The Institute of Food Technologists, with members representing more than 95 countries from virtually every discipline related to food science, will begin its ten consecutive years of Chicago meetings in 2020.

"We are pleased to make this commitment to Chicago," said Christie Tarantino-Dean, IFT chief executive officer. "Our history of record attendance coupled with exceptional meetings convinced us to bring our annual event to Chicago through 2030."

The IFT has brought together the brightest minds in food science, technology and related professions from academia, government, and industry to solve the world's greatest food

challenges since 1939. The organization held its first annual meeting in Chicago the following year and has met in Chicago many times over the succeeding decades. The group last met in Chicago in 2016, where attendance was a record-breaking 23,500.

The group will return to Chicago in 2018 and begin its ten-year commitment starting in 2020. The IFT's annual meeting generates approximately \$36.4 million in economic impact for the city of Chicago and state of Illinois each time it meets here. This announcement marks the first time the organization has made such an extensive commitment to a city.

"We are beyond thrilled that the Institute of Food Technologists has made this ten-year commitment to meet annually in Chicago," said Choose Chicago President & Chief Executive Officer David Whitaker. "The confidence IFT is placing in Chicago is fueled in part by our reputation and track record of hosting successful meetings. This year alone, of the 40 major conventions held in Chicago to date, 20 have broken some kind of attendance and/or exhibitor record including 9 that set all time attendance, 7 that experienced increased attendance over their prior year and 7 that set records in exhibit space sold. Attendance numbers like this also translate into additional jobs and economic benefit for our city."

IFT's annual events are both global - roughly 21 percent of attendees are international - and strategic, focusing on the latest research and innovations that continue to put science at the cornerstone of a safe, nutritious, and sustainable global food supply.

"This is great news, and with the recent opening of the Marriott Marquis Chicago hotel and the Wintrust Arena, the McCormick Square campus is even more attractive to important groups like IFT that want to host successful meetings," said Lori T. Healey, chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority.

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About the Institute of Food Technologists

The Institute of Food Technologists is a global organization of 17,000 individual members committed to advancing the science of food. The organization believes that science is essential to ensuring a global food supply that is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. For more information: visit [The Institute of Food Technologists](http://ift.org) is a global organization of 17,000 individual members committed to advancing the science of food. The organization believes that science is essential to ensuring a global food supply that is sustainable, safe, nutritious, and accessible to all. For more information: visit ift.org.

About Choose Chicago

Choose Chicago is the official sales and marketing organization responsible for promoting Chicago as a global visitor destination leveraging the city's unmatched assets to ensure the economic vitality of the city and its member business community. For more information, visit www.choosechicago.com. Follow @ChooseChicago on Twitter. Like us on Facebook.

About Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and McCormick Square

The McCormick Square campus features McCormick Place -- the largest exhibition and meeting facility in North America -- which offers 2.6 million square feet of exhibit space, 173 meeting rooms, one of the largest ballrooms in the world, the 1,258-room Hyatt Regency, the new 1,205-room Marriott Marquis Chicago, the 4,249-seat Arie Crown Theater and the new 10,387-seat Wintrust Arena. Located on Chicago's lakefront just minutes from downtown, McCormick Place is owned the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority and is managed by SMG, a worldwide convention management company.