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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Holiday Series Launches with a “Bang,” with the Festival of Lights BOAT PARADE WINNERS ANOUNCED

Savannah, Ga. – Nov. 28 – The Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa, together with the Savannah Harbor Foundation, is pleased to announce a successful holiday kick-off weekend, highlighted by the Festival of Lights and the naming of the winners of the Gingerbread Village and the Boat Parade of Lights.

The Boat Parade of Lights has become a Savannah staple, drawing locals and visitors to the city each Thanksgiving weekend. This year the Foundation re-branded the event as the “Festival of Lights” to more accurately define the event, as it has expanded to embrace both sides of the river and to include more entertainment.

The Foundation this year provided entertainment on River Street, with live announcing and judging, and the WannaBeatles, a Beatles tribute band featuring several Grammy-award winning musicians. This was in addition to the entertainment on the Westin Riverfront, which featured a holiday performance by Savannah Theatre, performances by the Savannah Pipe & Drum Band, and the traditional tree lighting ceremony with Gen. James Oglethorpe. The Boat Parade of Lights and live entertainment crescendoed to Savannah’s second-largest fireworks display of the year.

The Boat Parade of Lights has become a Savannah staple, drawing locals and visitors to the city each Thanksgiving weekend. Approximately 1200 people enjoyed the festivities from the Westin, with overflow watching from the Savannah International Trade and Convention Center, and several thousand partaking in the festivities on River Street

Westin general manager and president of the Savannah Harbor Foundation, Mark Spadoni, advocated for the expansion of the festivities, explaining that as the Boat Parade of Lights continues to gain popularity each year, expansion to River St. was a natural transition.

Spadoni says, “We are able to embrace even more of the community by offering more opportunities to enjoy the festivities. Our partners in the Savannah Riverfront organization and the CVB agreed and offered essential support to help make this happen.”

He goes on to explain that the Foundation has two primary missions: one is to support local children’s charities, and the other is to produce family-oriented events – “feel good,” free, events that can be enjoyed by all, and these events fulfill both facets of the mission.

“This is my favorite time of year, beginning with Thanksgiving when families gather to reflect and express gratitude to and for each other,” explained Spadoni. “The Foundation strives to bring joy



especially to families who may be struggling – be it financially, health-related, or other stresses that can bog us down. My greatest joy comes from providing an escape, a moment in time when none of that matters and families can be free to love and appreciate one-another without interruption. If we have done that, we have accomplished our mission.”

In addition to the entertainment provided the public, the boaters in the parade are incentivized to out-decorate each other, as they compete for bragging rights and their name on the Boat Parade of Lights “Best Overall Boat” trophy, displayed at The Westin year-round.

This year’s winners are:

Best Overall Boat – Fan Favorite

“Poya”
Captain Roff Sosser

Best Sail Boat

“Parrothead”
Captain Chic Meyer

Best Powerboat

“5:00 Somewhere”
Captains Dennis and Sue Whitmire

Best Small Boat

“P.R.”
Captain Ricky Taylor

The events were organized by the Savannah Harbor Foundation, a 501c(3) founded to support local childrens’ charities and to present family-oriented events. This year’s events benefit **Greenbriar Children’s Center** and **America’s Second Harvest**, as well as the **Savannah Harbor Foundation**.

The Westin and the Savannah Harbor Foundation offer a multitude of holiday events in addition to the Festival of Lights, such as the Gingerbread Village (on display through New Year’s); three opportunities for Breakfast with Santa; Musical Mondays Holiday Concerts; the 12 Days of Christmas; *Holiday Dining* events, and golf specials, spa specials, and winter drink menus from Starbucks and Midnight Sun Lounge.

For detailed information on holiday happenings, please visit our website at www.westinsavannah.com/holiday.

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About the Savannah Harbor Foundation

The Savannah Harbor Foundation is a 501(3)c organization founded in 2001 to support local children’s charities as well as to present family-oriented events, highlighted by the Savannah Harbor Foundation Annual Holiday Series.

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