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MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO INITIATES HERITAGE TOURISM ASSOCIATION

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, Calif. (Oct. 7, 2014) -- Mission San Juan Capistrano is inviting local businesses and non-profits to be a part of its inaugural San Juan Capistrano Heritage Tourism Association/Marketing Co-Op in an effort to attract, retain and support the visitor-ship to the historic downtown.

Heritage Tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism-related markets worldwide, giving cities like San Juan Capistrano -- which have tangible cultural assets -- an advantage in the competitive tourism market. Heritage tourists tend to spend more money than other tourists in the U.S.

Many tourists are visiting San Juan Capistrano because of its unique identity as a historic area, anchored by Mission San Juan Capistrano, recognized as the birthplace of Orange County.

Among the many historic and cultural assets, San Juan Capistrano is home to the Mission, the Los Rios Historic District, a notable Native American history, the Legend of the Swallows, a historic train depot, an equestrian heritage, a renowned library, many outstanding community curated adobes, festivals, concerts, and art shows -- all within a short walking distance from one another.

"We have a unique opportunity here in San Juan Capistrano to share our wonderful history with the community, the region, even the world," said Mechelle Lawrence Adams, Executive Director of Mission San Juan Capistrano. "It's not only our pleasure, but also our obligation to ensure the past is recognized and celebrated in a way it truly deserves."

The concept, initiated by the Mission Preservation Foundation, has been endorsed by Ann Ronan, president of the San Juan Capistrano Chamber of Commerce and owner of San Juan Capistrano Travel.

"Heritage Tourism is a natural focus for San Juan Capistrano with our ample supply of heritage sites combined with the positive attitudes of our locals towards tourism," Ronan said. "The Association's efforts to increase Heritage Tourism is one important component of the many needed to increase economic activity in the local downtown seven days a week, year-round."

Mission San Juan Capistrano is leading the efforts to start the Heritage Tourism Association (HTA) by investing \$25,000. The Mission will host two receptions for interested businesses on Oct. 22, one at 10 a.m. and another at 2 p.m. To RSVP, contact Brenda Mumma at bmumma@sjc.com or call (949) 234-1312.

Prospective membership in the HTA Marketing Co-op is extended to specific entities that are located in the Mission District, the Los Rios Historic District or that directly promote, supplement or enhance local history or serve the visitor/tourist experience. Enrollment deadline is Oct. 31.

Membership marketing benefits will launch officially with collateral and online outreach by Jan. 1, 2015. For more information call Laura Freese at (949) 274-6844.

About Mission San Juan Capistrano:

Known as the "Jewel of the Missions," Mission San Juan Capistrano is a historic landmark and museum that boasts of quality permanent exhibits featuring original artifacts as well as traveling and temporary exhibits on a wide variety of topics.

The site itself serves as a living outdoor museum with original buildings constructed by Native Americans in the 18th century including the Serra Chapel, Great Stone Church, and the original padres' quarters of the South Wing.

The Mission was founded on November 1, 1776 by Padre Junipero Serra as the seventh in the chain of the twenty-one California missions established by Spain, and is Orange County's only mission. Every year,

over 50,000 students visit the Mission and engage in an inspirational learning experience via the Mission Matters programming, as part of their State required California history studies.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is owned by the Diocese of Orange and is supported by the Mission Preservation Foundation, which is comprised of business and community leaders committed to ensuring the long term preservation and viability of Orange County's only Mission. The Mission receives no funding from either the Church or the State of California and charges admission funds as a means of providing public access.

Mission San Juan Capistrano is located at 26801 Ortega Highway, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675. Open Daily 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Good Friday afternoon. Admission is \$9 adults; \$8 seniors (60 years or over); \$6 children (ages 4 to 11); and children ages 3 and under are admitted free. Free audio guide with senior and adult admission. For more information, call (949) 234-1300 or visit www.missionsjc.com.