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## **Navy Pier's First-Ever Benefit Event, "A Celebration ExPIERience," Sets Course for the Pier's Second Century by Exceeding Fundraising Goals**

*Event surpasses goals, raising more than \$1.7 million to support the Pier's free public programs*

**CHICAGO** – Navy Pier, Chicago's mission-driven cultural district, held its first-ever fundraising event, "A Celebration ExPIERience," securing more than \$1.7 million in funds to directly support the Pier's free public programming available to 9.3 million annual guests.

Co-chaired by Lisa and Jeffrey Aronin; Virginia and Norman Bobins; Joan and Bill Brodsky; and Yvonne and Devon Bruce; the event welcomed more than 600 guests to enjoy Chicago-inspired food and several captivating performances from locally-based artists. Seizing a one-of-kind experience that started upon arrival, guests rode trolleys to the **Aon Grand Ballroom** along the Pier's famed South Dock, which included a docent-led tour and a private fireworks display. Custom built 360-degree projection and LED screens created a completely immersive, technological experience that brought the entire Pier to life inside the ballroom and featured the epic talent from Navy Pier's programming roster of artists, including Jabowen Dixon; Bourné Family; Lowdown Brass Band; Alexa Grae; Katie Kadan; Yuri Lane; Reginald Robinson; and the 7-Jeff Award winning E. Faye Butler; Tony-nominated Felicia P. Fields; and world-class Artistic Director Josephine Lee.

"A Celebration ExPIERience," also honored the Polk Family and Polk Bros. Foundation for their legacy gift and partnership. After Navy Pier became a nonprofit in 2011, the foundation recognized the Pier's potential to showcase the cultural richness of our city and serve the community. Their \$20 million transformative gift allowed the Pier to convert the 17-acre **Polk Bros Park** into a multi-use space.

"The partnership between the Polk Bros. Foundation and Navy Pier has been truly outstanding and, as a result, Polk Bros Park has definitely exceeded our expectations. We are extremely excited about the opportunities going forward to offer fabulous, free cultural programming for all Chicagoans and our city's visitors," said Polk Bros. Foundation Board Chair Sandra Guthman. "I know the current Polk family is thrilled and, I'm sure, so are our ancestors looking down on Polk Bros Park and Navy Pier."

The excitement continued throughout the evening, with the announcement Fifth Third Bank will continue its investment in Chicago at Navy Pier. Building on the momentum of the Pier's naming partners – Aon, Peoples Gas and the Polk Family and Polk Bros. Foundation – Fifth Third Bank announced they will elevate their presence through a multiyear naming partnership of the reimagined Family Pavilion, set to debut as **Fifth Third Bank Family Pavilion at Navy Pier** in spring 2018. The expanded partnership represents both, Navy Pier and Fifth Third Bank's ongoing commitment to serving the local and global community by delivering world-class experiences that embody the Pier's values of excellence, integrity, inclusion and stewardship.

"We are humbled by the generous support of the hundreds of donors who joined us to advance the mission of Navy Pier. The generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations enables us to continue to strengthen our free arts and cultural programs, and to provide an unparalleled experience to our guests," said Marilynn Gardner, Navy Pier President and CEO. "As our evolution continues, this support assures Navy Pier is a free and accessible cultural hub well into our second century."

"Navy Pier is setting the standard for community-focused, affordable cultural destinations. Our first-ever Celebration ExPIERience demonstrates the Pier's commitment to partnerships with like-minded philanthropic organizations and businesses. Partners such as Fifth Third Bank play a pivotal role in advancing this mission. Their generous contribution, recognized with the naming of Fifth Third Bank Family Pavilion, underscores their investment in Chicago and in the People's Pier," said Navy Pier Board Chairman Bill Brodsky.

To date, more than 100 civic and community-based organizations have partnered with Navy Pier in its ongoing evolution, contributing financially, strategically, and operationally, solidifying its transformation as a cultural district and major venue in Chicago's cultural landscape. Pier-wide partners include: American Airlines; Aon; Big Bus; Fifth Third Bank; MillerCoors; and Pepsi. Foundation program partners include: Paul M. Angell Family Foundation; Chicago Free For All Fund at the Chicago Community Trust; Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts; The Joyce Foundation; Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust; and Polk Bros. Foundation.

For more information on Navy Pier's physical and programmatic transformation, please visit [www.navypier.org](http://www.navypier.org).

For photos from "A Celebration ExPIERience," [click here](#).

#### ***Navy Pier Mission Statement***

*Navy Pier is the People's Pier, Chicago's lakefront treasure, welcoming all and offering dynamic and eclectic experiences through partnerships and programs that inspire discovery and wonder.*

#### **About Navy Pier**

**Visit our new website, [navypier.org](http://navypier.org). This change is small, but impactful. We are excited to move in to our second century as a mission-driven cultural district, welcoming all and inspiring our more than 9 million guests.**

Located on Lake Michigan, Navy Pier is one of the top-attended nonprofit cultural destinations in the Midwest, stretching more than six city blocks and welcoming more than nine million guests annually. Originally opened in 1916 as a shipping and recreation facility, this Chicago landmark showcases more than 50 acres of parks, restaurants, attractions, retail shops, sightseeing and dining cruise boats, exposition facilities and more. In 2017, Navy Pier continues to celebrate its centennial with a series of special events and programming, year-round rides on the *Centennial Wheel* and ongoing pier-wide redevelopment efforts as part of the Centennial Vision. Navy Pier, as a nonprofit organization, maintains and manages the 50-acre pier that is being redeveloped as a contemporary, environmentally responsible urban space. More information is available at [www.navypier.org](http://www.navypier.org).