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Tourism Industry Members Honored by Gov. Daugaard

PIERRE, SD – Gov. Dennis Daugaard and the South Dakota Department of Tourism presented awards to tourism industry members the evening of Thursday, January 18th at the 2018 Governor's Conference on Tourism in Pierre.

The 9th Annual Rooster Rush Cacklin' Community Award went to the community of Pierre for its efforts to welcome pheasant hunters to the state. The Pierre Chamber of Commerce organized giveaways, hosted concerts, and held a craft and vendor fair for hunters' wives.

"Pierre once again rolled out the orange carpet and went above and beyond to make our pheasant hunters feel extra special," said Gov. Daugaard.

The George S. Mickelson Great Service Awards were given to The Lodge at Deadwood, Rush Mountain Adventure Park, and Crazy Horse Memorial. This award honors businesses, communities, or organizations that have done an exemplary job of exceeding visitors' expectations in customer service.

"Our winners are constantly evolving to meet the wants and needs of today's visitor and working to increase their length of stay in our state," said the governor. "They are raising the bar on customer service."

The Excellence in Tourism Innovation Award is given to an industry partner for their innovative thinking in making their destination, business, or attraction even more appealing to visitors. This year's award was given to The Great Plains Zoo and Delbridge Museum of Natural History for their marketing and promotions efforts surrounding the hosting of two koalas, which resulted in a nine percent increase in visitation.

"The Great Plains Zoo has been expanding and upgrading its offerings for the past decade but really knocked it out of the park when they created a promotion that had visitors extending their stay to experience it," stated Gov. Daugaard.

This year, a brand new award was presented to three industry members from across the state who displayed outstanding and genuine hospitality to visitors. The Ruth Ziolkowski Outstanding Hospitality & Customer Service Award was given to Pouran Borchardt from the Children's

Museum of South Dakota in Brookings, Rita Franz from the Black Hills Visitor Information Center in Rapid City, and Dennis Scott from the Prehistoric Indian Village in Mitchell.

“These industry members represent the generosity and hospitality that Ruth showed visitors each day. I thank them for extending South Dakota kindness to everyone they meet,” said Gov. Dugaard.

The A. H. Pankow Award recognizes a representative of the media for showing superior interest in and coverage of the South Dakota tourism industry. The Meredith Corporation and Midwest Living Magazine were awarded the honor for their tireless promotion of South Dakota as a premier vacation destination to their millions of readers.

“Meredith Corporation and Midwest Living has been a longtime advocate for South Dakota travel and know South Dakota as well as most of us living here. They are consistently touting the state as a ‘must-see’ destination to the entire country,” said the governor.

Lastly, the Ben Black Elk Award honors an individual who makes outstanding contributions to the state’s visitor industry. This year’s award was given to Craig Pugsley for his 40 years of service to the tourism industry through his work with Custer State Park.

“Craig is credited with helping shape the annual Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival into the world-class, three-day event it is today. He has also been involved in efforts promoting the city of Custer and the entire Black Hills region, believing that all destinations benefit when travelers come to see our icons,” said the governor.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism and the South Dakota Arts Council. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.

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Media Notes: For high resolution, downloadable images of the award winners, please use this Dropbox link: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2f3k8ldx5dl0vxn/AAD7K-y3qx14gU84LGF4hS52a?dl=0>