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VISIT PHILADELPHIA® ANNOUNCES THREE NEW STAFF APPOINTMENTS
New Hires & A Promotion Focus On Strategic Alliances, Hotel Relations & Visitor Appeal

PHILADELPHIA, February 15, 2017 – VISIT PHILADELPHIA® welcomed two new staffers and promoted another within the organization this month, adding Kara Callahan as vice president of advertising and strategic alliances, Laura Burkhardt as vice president of visitor appeal, and elevating Jim Werner to vice president of hotel relations and tourism development.

“We’re happy to welcome Kara and Laura and to promote Jim, a long-time member of our team,” said Meryl Levitz, president and CEO of VISIT PHILADELPHIA. “We’re coming off a banner year for hospitality in 2016, and the new leadership positions will strengthen our talented team by helping us to fulfill our mission, reach our goals and maintain the success of leisure tourism in our region.”

Kara Callahan, Vice President of Advertising and Strategic Alliances:

As the vice president of advertising and strategic alliances, Kara Callahan oversees VISIT PHILADELPHIA’s advertising and partnership programs. She will also work to expand the reach around brand campaigns like **With Love, Philadelphia XOXO®** while leading the company’s integrated marketing programs, design services and video production.

Callahan comes to VISIT PHILADELPHIA from The Franklin Institute, where she spent six years leading marketing strategy and promotional partnership efforts. Callahan has received two Mid-Atlantic Emmy Awards and a nomination for her work on the museum’s “80 Years Of Discovery” commercial spot and other video promotion of exhibitions such as *One Day In Pompeii* and *Gengis Khan: Bring The Legend To Life*. This seasoned marketer also spent eight years as the national marketing director with Madison Square Garden Entertainment for the national tour of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.

Callahan earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Delaware and, in 2016, completed Drexel University’s LeBow College of Business’ Leading for Change Fellowship, a leadership development program for the city’s leaders in the public sector.

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Laura Burkhardt, Vice President of Visitor Appeal:

As the vice president of visitor appeal, a new role at VISIT PHILADELPHIA, **Laura Burkhardt** leads the company's strategic relationships with restaurants, shops, museums and attractions throughout the five-county area to ensure a high-quality experience for Philadelphia's 41 million domestic visitors each year. She also oversees company-wide photography initiatives, helping communications, web, advertising and social media efforts to tell compelling visual stories for Philadelphia.

Before Burkhardt joined the VISIT PHILADELPHIA team, this experienced travel professional worked as the publisher of *Where Philadelphia* magazine since 2005 and brings more than 25 years of experience in the hospitality sector.

Jim Werner, Vice President of Hotel Relations and Tourism Development:

Previously VISIT PHILADELPHIA's senior director of industry relations, **Jim Werner** now serves as the vice president of hotel relations and tourism development. In this role, Werner leads the expansion of new overnight leisure initiatives and manages the company's relationships with the hotel, hospitality and lodging community, which is set to see a flurry of development over the next couple years. By July 2018, Center City Philadelphia is projected to add 1,795 new rooms—a 16.1% increase in supply over the end of last year (*source: CBRE Hotels*).

Since 2015, Werner has taught as an adjunct professor at Temple University's School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management, where he teaches courses in destination management/marketing and destination planning and development.

A native of Philadelphia, Werner joined the VISIT PHILADELPHIA staff in 2005 as the partnership and promotion manager. A graduate of LaSalle University, he began his career in the public sector in 2002 as a communications manager for the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website and blog, visitphilly.com and uwishunu.com, visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos of Greater Philadelphia, visit the photo gallery of visitphilly.com/pressroom.