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Guthrie Territorial Christmas Foundation
P.O. Box 1523
Guthrie, OK 73044
Phone: (405) 466-7720
Email: info.gtcf@gmail.com
Facebook and Instagram: @guthriesterritorialchristmas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Guthrie's Territorial Christmas Foundation regrettably announces the cancellation of all large public gathering events for 2020: The Lighted Christmas Parade, the Territorial Governor Race and Tree Lighting Ceremony, the Distinguished Homes Tour, and both Victorian Walks.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDATION:

Dear Neighbors,

To say that 2020 has been a challenging year would be quite the understatement. Guthrie Territorial Christmas Foundation (GTCF) is just one of thousands of non-profit organizations struggling in 2020 to strike a balance of community partnership and support while seriously and thoughtfully weighing decisions and, ideally, avoiding any tone-deaf, insensitive, or irresponsible actions.

The mission of Guthrie's Territorial Christmas Foundation is to promote the Guthrie business community and to showcase our unique, historical town while fostering a traditional Christmas spirit of faith, gratitude, and service. Guthrie's Territorial Christmas Celebrations are well-established legacy events not only in the town, but in the state and in the nation. While it is impossible to know the full economic and social impact of these events, we have always known that the impact is immense. People travel hundreds and thousands of miles to experience a Guthrie Christmas, and many local businesses rely on the increased traffic during the Christmas season to carry them through the slower parts of the year. As a small community non-profit organization, GTCF relies solely on fundraising, grants, and sponsorships to fund these yearly events. GTCF is comprised of 7 local volunteers who organize and plan the events a year in advance, and relies heavily on partnerships with the City, Chamber of Commerce, the fire and police departments, local business owners, organizations, clubs, and churches, and community volunteers to pull off the Celebrations. Truly, there are hundreds of moving pieces to each small facet of Guthrie's Territorial Christmas Celebrations—all with far-reaching ripples in the pond.

Because of how our infrastructure functions, GTCF recognized early in this worldwide crisis that the planning and execution of the 2020 Christmas Celebrations would not be business-as-usual. Indeed, every aspect of normalcy was almost immediately neutralized by the pandemic. Even so, we waited and watched and hoped for a path to present itself which would allow us to move forward with Guthrie's traditional celebrations in a safe and successful way for all involved.

Unfortunately, as we have seen in other cities, states, and countries, COVID-19 cares not for the plans, hopes, nor needs of humanity. Data and science repeatedly show that large group gatherings create hotspots of viral spread, and that the elderly and immunocompromised (which make up a very large percentage of our board, volunteer base, and community) are not safe. Therefore, after over 5 months of waiting and watching it is with a heavy heart that we announce the cancelation of the traditional 2020 Territorial Christmas Celebrations.

That said, we are absolutely *not* capitulating nor admitting defeat to this virus. Danish economist Ester Boserup famously believed, "necessity is the mother of invention." These unprecedented times may have destroyed our

normalcy, but they have not stolen our creativity, our faith, our gratitude, nor our desire to serve. We may not be able to fundraise or host the big events like *normal*, but that does not mean all is lost.

It is with this in mind that we recommit our focus, our efforts, and our humble assets into showcasing Guthrie businesses during the 2020 holiday season. We will salvage what traditional activities we can, such as lighting the Territorial Tree. This year the tree will be lit without the large group gathering, and in honor of our nation's healthcare workers and all who have been lost to COVID-19 and their families. Meanwhile we are working closely with Guthrie businesses to support them during this global crisis in new ways, as well as working on new, safe, socially-distanced activities for the community. Stay tuned for more information as we head into the final quarter of 2020.

In closing, GTCF promises to continue working hard at sharing the uniqueness that is Guthrie, Oklahoma while encouraging economic stability and even, God-willing, prosperity during these unstable times—but we and the businesses cannot do it without you. We ask that you, as active citizens of our wonderful community, join us in uplifting and shopping local businesses as much as possible. No kind word, act of service, or purchase is too small. On top of this support, may we all extend grace, patience, and prayers for Guthrie businesses dealing with closures, skeleton crews, increased disinfection practices, increased stress, and increased overhead. May God bless and protect them, as well as Guthrie's heroic healthcare workers, city leaders, police and fire services, USPS workers, school administrators and educators, and all of those whose essential services keep our communities going. Lastly, may we all dwell in the humble, magical simplicity of the true meaning of Christmas.

We are all in this together. Together may we all help foster healing, unity, and be an example for others in this time of uncertainty.

All of our love and respect,

