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### **25 Years Later – Taste of Tacoma® Still Pleases Palates**

Over 250,000 donned their party hats and traveled to Point Defiance Park this past weekend to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Emerald Queen Casino's Taste of Tacoma.

In celebration of this momentous occasion, EQC's Taste of Tacoma offered festival-goers extra discounts on some festival favorites. On Friday, guests enjoyed a 25 percent discount on Taste It! tickets in addition to a wine-tasting happy hour. Hundreds of guests gathered on Saturday afternoon to enjoy a free piece of birthday cake with City of Tacoma officials and Metro Parks board members, courtesy of Albertson's on Pearl Street. On Sunday, families enjoyed the fun and captivating shows of Bubble Man Garry Golightly.

This year's event featured a veritable smorgasbord of food with everything from jerk chicken to jambalaya available to satisfy appetites, drawing the largest crowd in the festival's history on Saturday. Festival-goers found a new item on restaurant menus this year: the Hope Heart Right Bite, a healthier menu option for festival-goers looking to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The \$3 Taste item was also present on all menus, allowing guests to sample an array of culinary creations without putting a dent in their wallet.

Half Moon Bay Bar and Grill received the First Place Entrée award for their Dungeness crab cakes for the second year in a row. The second place award went to Billy McHale's for their bacon-wrapped prawns while Mick Kelly's Irish Pub, a first time participant in the Taste of Tacoma®, received the third place award for their corned beef sliders. Famous Dave's Barbeque continued their winning streak when they received the Best Barbeque award in addition to securing the Best Booth Design award. The

Best Hope Heart Right Bite award went to Southern Kitchen for their red beans and rice with collard greens. Crepe Tyme received the Best Dessert award for their Nutella and strawberry crepes.

Attendance on Saturday set a new single-day record for the Taste that not only generated strong sales, but caused Pierce Transit to work feverishly to accommodate the thousands of guests who took advantage of the Taste Express. Transportation between Tacoma Community College and Point Defiance Park was provided for guests for just \$3.50.

Musicians and comedians from around the Northwest delighted crowds with non-stop entertainment over the course of the three-day event. Huge crowds gathered on Saturday to enjoy the music of regional favorites, The Beatniks. Some guests danced the day away to country, jazz and rock while others were kept in stitches at the Comedy Club. Families also enjoyed the Funtastic carnival, where rides and games thrilled and entertained guests.

Seven wineries from the West Coast convened in the Rose Garden for the *Wine & Jazz* event. Guests sampled a wide array of wines while relaxing to music of the smooth jazz stage. Net proceeds from the *Wine & Jazz* event benefit Bates Technical College Foundation, which provides scholarships for students.

Despite a cool start to the weekend, the sunshine made a strong appearance and cold treats and chilled drinks were in high demand. Over 11,000 guests created a personalized, one-of-a-kind sundae with the help of Smucker's toppings while over 18,000 guests sipped on free samples from Juicy Juice and Nesquick. Yoplait Delights provided sweet treats in record time, handing out more than 5,000 samples in just five hours!

Over 20,000 guests enjoyed a variety of unique, organic breads from a new sponsor, Dave's Killer Bread. The WAHL mobile barbershop made a pit-stop at the Taste

of Tacoma®, trimming up more than 400 men who entered the WAHLNATION.com's Man of the Year Contest. Long time title sponsor and major financial supporter of the Taste of Tacoma, Emerald Queen Casino, dealt over 6,000 games of blackjack for festival-goers looking to win a great prize.

After 25 years of food and fun, it's easy to see how The Emerald Queen Casino's Taste of Tacoma has become Tacoma's ultimate family picnic.

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