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A Stunning 40,000 Attend Silver Dollar City's 3-day 50th Birthday Celebration

Congressional Proclamation recognizes the 1880s Theme Park as "The Home of American Craftsmanship"

BRANSON, MO 5/6/10— In the famed tourism destination of music-focused Branson, rainy skies proved no deterrent as a stunning 40,000 people joined Silver Dollar City to celebrate its 50th anniversary weekend, held April 30 through May 2 at the 1880s theme park.

The celebrity-packed celebration — which featured appearances by U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Missouri) and Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon — also saw a record-setting crowd of 5,000 filter into the 4,200-seat Echo Hollow Amphitheater for the High Noon Birthday Bash, held on May 1, exactly 50 years after Silver Dollar City opened for business.

The Bash included performances by Branson performers The Haygoods, the Lennon Sisters and Legends in Concerts' Blues Brothers. Country-music star Louise Mandrell made a surprise appearance, playing the fiddle and personally congratulating Silver Dollar City co-founders Jack and Pete Herschend for 50 years of making memories. Onlookers in the audience included Andy Williams and Branson's famous Japanese fiddler, Shoji Tabuchi.

Other surprises included video-taped congratulations by some of country music's biggest performers including Charlie Daniels, Randy Travis, Reba McEntire, Rascal Flatts, Montgomery Gentry, Lady Antebellum and Dolly Parton.

A U.S. House Resolution (affirmed by the U.S. Senate) proclaimed Silver Dollar City, "The Home of American Craftsmanship," and Missouri Governor Nixon issued a proclamation declaring May 1, 2010, Silver Dollar City Day, while Branson Mayor Raeanne Presley declared May 1 Silver Dollar City day into perpetuity.

Silver Dollar City "made such an incredible difference to southwest Missouri and the millions of people who come here each year," Blunt said in addressing the crowd.

The numbers found within the proclamations show the impact to which Blunt refers: Silver Dollar City has seen 65 million guests since it opened on May 1, 1960, contributed \$100 million to the state economy, and has employed 35,000 people over the years, including the nearly 2,000 Herschend Family Entertainment employees who work in the Branson area.

“I often refer to Branson and its attractions as the crown jewels of Missouri ... if so, then Silver Dollar City is the Hope diamond of Missouri tourism,” Nixon said.

While the celebration drew a large contingent of dignitaries and celebrities, there were many others in the crowd who played an unsung but crucial role in making Silver Dollar City what it is today: its employees. A handful of the park’s first-season employees made the trek to celebrate, including Sharon Shannahan Arndt from Ohio, and were recognized for their contributions. “It’s just great,” Arndt said. “I’m having a ball.”

Silver Dollar City general manager Brad Thomas reminded the crowd that the weekend’s festivities marked only the beginning of a year dedicated to celebrating the historic milestone.

“It isn’t just about this weekend,” Thomas told the crowd. “The celebration goes on through Christmas.”

Silver Dollar City is owned by Herschend Family Entertainment, the nation’s largest family-owned theme park corporation. For more information www.silverdollarcity.com.

CUTLINE #1: Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon (fourth from left) and U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt (sixth from right) joined Silver Dollar City co-founders Jack and Pete Herschend and their families to celebrate the park’s 50th anniversary on May 1. A record-setting 5,000 people filled the 4,200-seat Echo Hollow Amphitheater, such as Andy Williams (foreground) to join in the celebration. About 40,000 people visited the park over the three-day celebration, April 30-May 2.

CUTLINE #2: Louise Mandrell and The Lennon Sisters joined the party as the 1880s theme park Silver Dollar City, in Branson, Missouri, celebrated 50 years with celebrities, performers, proclamations and near record crowds of 40,000 people visiting during the 3-day extravaganza.