



DOLLYWOOD PRESIDENT CRAIG ROSS APPOINTED CHAIR OF TENNESSEE STATE TOURISM COMMITTEE

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. (Tuesday, February 4, 2020) — Tennessee Tourist Development Commissioner Mark Ezell recently appointed Craig Ross, President of The Dollywood Company, as chairperson for the Tennessee State Tourism Committee, a board comprised of tourism leaders and advocates from across the state.

As president of The Dollywood Company, Ross has spearheaded a period of unprecedented growth at the much-heralded theme park destination. Since 2010, The Dollywood Company has invested more than \$220 million into its properties as part of its ongoing investment strategy. Expansions undertaken since 2010 include Dollywood's DreamMore Resort and Spa, roller coasters Lightning Rod and FireChaser Express, as well as TailSpin Racer at Dollywood's Splash Country. In 2019, the park opened the \$37 million Wildwood Grove, the largest addition in Dollywood's history.

"When I dreamed up Dollywood years ago, my main goals were to draw more people in to visit the beautiful Smoky Mountains and to employ so many of the wonderful people here in my home," explained park namesake, Dolly Parton. "We've had so many thoughtful and talented leaders in this company through the years to help us get to where we are now. Ever since I met Craig, I've been truly impressed with the forethought and level of detail he has shown to help me put wings on some of my biggest dreams. It takes a lot to keep up with a dreamer like me and he certainly does a good job of it. I can't wait to see what great things Commissioner Ezell, Craig and this committee have in store for the whole state!"

With more than three million visitors annually at Dollywood theme park and Dollywood's Splash Country water park, the Pigeon Forge parks are the state's most-visited ticketed attraction. As Dollywood continues to prove itself as a premier family vacation destination, so does the state of Tennessee.

According to the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, the state took in more than \$22 billion in travel expenditures in 2018. This represents a six percent increase over 2017 and is 20% higher than the national average growth rate. Last year, all 95 counties across the state saw an increase in travel spending with tourists spending an estimated \$60 million each day.

"Because of Craig's excellent work at Dollywood, Tennessee has one of the finest tourism destinations in the country, and we are the envy of many other states," said Governor Bill Lee. "Maria and I thank him for his willingness to serve our state as the Chair of the Tennessee Tourism Committee, and it ensures our state will benefit even more from his enthusiasm and dedication."

“Craig brings extraordinary vision, passion and business acumen to this role. His leadership will build on the tremendous momentum of the Tennessee Tourism Committee since it was formed nine years ago,” said Commissioner Mark Ezell, Tennessee Department of Tourist Development. “We have an exceptionally talented team, and Craig’s guidance will make a difference in communities throughout Tennessee.”

Previously, Ross served as Vice-President and General Manager of day-to-day operations for Dollywood theme park. He joined Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE), Dolly Parton’s operating partner at Dollywood, in 2007. Prior to his time at HFE, Ross served as Executive Vice President and General Manager of Kings Island theme park in Cincinnati. He also was Senior Vice President of Resale for Paramount Parks and held a variety of leadership roles at Kings Dominion theme park and Carowinds theme park. Ross also has served on the board of directors for the Dollywood Foundation as well as World Choice Investments (WCI), the operating partner for Parton’s dinner theater attractions.

Ross, a native of Richmond, Virginia, and his wife, Cathy, reside in Knoxville, Tennessee.

-Dollywood2020-

About The Dollywood Company: A highly-awarded and widely-recognized leader in the amusement industry, The Dollywood Company consists of the 160-acre Dollywood theme park; the 35-acre Dollywood’s Splash Country; Dollywood’s DreamMore Resort and Spa; and Dollywood’s Smoky Mountain Cabins. As unique as its namesake and owner Dolly Parton, Dollywood is the 2010 Applause Award winner, the theme park industry’s highest accolade; winner of more than 40 Golden Ticket Awards; and recipient of 27 Brass Ring Awards for Live Entertainment (more than any other theme park in the world). The park is located near Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and has been named a top-three US theme park by *USA Today* on multiple occasions. Dollywood is open mid-March through early January and offers rides and attractions, shows, and crafters authentic to the East Tennessee region. Dollywood’s Splash Country, recognized by the *Travel Channel* and *TripAdvisor* as one of the country’s most beautiful water parks operates from mid-May to Labor Day. Dollywood’s DreamMore Resort and Spa provides guests spectacular mountain views and family-friendly amenities next door to Dollywood theme park and Dollywood’s Splash Country. Dollywood’s Smoky Mountain Cabins offers luxurious cabin accommodations overlooking Dollywood. For more information, call 1-800-DOLLYWOOD or visit dollywood.com. Operating days and hours vary.

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