



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2019

Wonders of Wildlife and Dogwood Canyon Nature Park become Certified Autism Centers on World Autism Awareness Day

Designation reflects enhanced efforts to serve individuals with autism and other sensory needs

Springfield, Mo. – In honor of World Autism Day on April 2, 2019, The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) has designated Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium and Dogwood Canyon Nature Park as Certified Autism Centers (CAC). The designation is awarded to organizations who have completed professional training and review processes with the goal to better serve individuals with autism and other sensory needs.

"Johnny Morris and our entire Conservation Attractions team is dedicated to helping connect people of all ages and abilities to the outdoors," said Bryan Nadeau, Vice President of Johnny Morris' Conservation Attractions. "By partnering with IBCCES, Wonders of Wildlife and Dogwood Canyon Nature Park are taking steps to ensure that all families have an opportunity to have fun and get involved in conservation and the outdoors."

The certification process includes thorough training that helps team members learn to recognize, welcome and accommodate guests with autism spectrum disorder and other sensory needs. Under the direction of IBCCES, both attractions will continue their commitment to welcome all families with ongoing staff training and special activity adaptations that visitors of all abilities, ages and areas of interest will be able to enjoy.

Parents with children on the autism spectrum often find vacationing and visiting attractions such as museums, aquariums, and theme parks to be a challenge due to sensory needs, dietary restrictions and safety concerns. For almost 20 years, IBCCES has been the industry leader in autism training for licensed healthcare professionals and educators around the globe. IBCCES recognized that many families with children with special needs have limited options and created programs specifically for the hospitality and travel industry.

In response to the need for more trained and certified destinations, IBCCES also created AutismTravel.com, a free online resource for parents that lists certified destinations and connects families to other resources and each other. Each destination listed on the site has met Certified Autism Center requirements, which includes extensive staff training conducted by leading autism experts. Wonders of Wildlife and Dogwood Canyon Nature Park will also be listed with other CACs on CertifiedAutismCenter.com, created by IBCCES to help families and individuals easily connect with businesses and resources committed to serving individuals on the spectrum.

###

About Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium

Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium consists of an all-new 1.5-million-gallon Aquarium Adventure showcasing 35,000 live fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds, and immersive Wildlife Galleries that bring visitors eye-to-eye with the greatest collection of record-setting game animals ever assembled. Created by noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder/CEO Johnny Morris, the 350,000-square-foot experience celebrates those who hunt, fish, and act as stewards of the land and water. Located next to Bass Pro Shops National Headquarters in Springfield, Missouri the campus is a centerpiece of America's Conservation Capital in Missouri's Ozark Mountains. Wonders of Wildlife has been voted "America's Best New Attraction" and "America's Best Aquarium" by the readers of *USA TODAY*. For more information, visit www.wondersofwildlife.org.

About Dogwood Canyon Nature Park

Dogwood Canyon Nature Park is a 10,000-acre slice of alluring Ozarks paradise located in Lampe, Missouri. The vision of Bass Pro Shops founder/CEO Johnny Morris, the not-for-profit park serves as an outdoor playground dedicated to connecting families with nature while conserving the rich history and natural beauty of the Ozarks. The park offers hiking, biking, Segway tours, wildlife tours, horseback riding, and trout fishing set against a backdrop of towering bluffs, waterfalls, spring-fed creek beds, and wildlife such as American bison, Rocky Mountain elk and white-tailed deer. The park also features a fully restored working gristmill, museum, restaurant, and conservation education center that connects to a treehouse built by Animal Planet's *Treehouse Masters*. For more information, visit www.dogwoodcanyon.org.

About IBCCES

Delivering The Global Standard For Training and Certification in The Field of Cognitive Disorders –

IBCCES provides a series of certifications that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. These programs are recognized around the world as the leading benchmark for training and certification in the areas of autism and other cognitive disorders. As part of our commitment to sharing the latest innovations and research, IBCCES also hosts the International Symposium on Cognitive Research and Disorders to create a forum for collaboration among industry stakeholders.

Media Contacts:

Wonders of Wildlife

press@wondersofwildlife.org

417-225-1189

IBCCES

Meredith Tekin

meredith@ibcces.org

904-508-0135