

## THE GARDENS CELEBRATES VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS FOR THE 2015 FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

FORT BRAGG, CA—January 8, 2016—Attendance at Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens’ annual holiday benefit, Festival of Lights, increased by more than 2,000 visitors over the previous year. Altogether, the 12 nights of festivities saw more than 7,000 smiling faces. The annual light display encourages travelers to make a winter getaway to the Mendocino Coast. The Little River Inn is one of the local inns offering packages or specials in conjunction with the event. General Manager, Cally Dym tells us, “We were surprised to discover that many of the packages were booked by friends and neighbors that wanted to enjoy the experience together. Thank you Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens for sharing your gardens at this amazing event each year”. Since its start in 2010, the Festival of Lights has grown exponentially becoming a popular holiday tradition on the coast.

There was entertainment galore with ten musical acts, a jolly Santa Claus, free face painting, and of course a garden filled with glittering lights and inventive displays. Volunteers from the nonprofit support organization, Friends of the Gardens, baked goodies for the Holiday Sweets Café providing hot drinks, and cookies of all kinds. Generous donations by North Coast Brewing Company and some of the best local wineries kept the bar jumping and helped raise funds. Rhody’s Garden Café served 3-Bean Chili in the big tent, offering visitors and volunteers a delicious way to warm up on those cool evenings. The homemade chili, hot cocoa, and spiced cider were made possible thanks to repeat sponsors, Harvest Market.

Behind the scenes, Festival of Lights Media Sponsors, KOZT The Coast FM, spread the news of this wonderful benefit near and far. Team Blue 4 of AmeriCorps NCCC Pacific Region donated 2,000 hours to the Gardens in the months of November and December. A part of the AmeriCorps team’s hours decreased decoration time to just over a week. Premier Sponsors, Mendo Lake Credit Union, donated funds and a number of MLCU employees volunteered as greeters and ticket takers. Students from the Fort Bragg High School Interact Club lent a hand on several nights of the event. Mara’s Coffee House, new neighbors of the Gardens, loaned several extra parking spaces to eager visitors each evening. The Festival of Lights was an immense success and would not have been possible without the help of over 200 volunteers and our generous sponsors.

The 2015 Festival of Lights Gala was a grand slam as well! More than 100 people filled the beautifully decorated tent for the grand event, raising funds to allow 1,700 children to attend this year’s Festival of Lights. The Gala delighted guests with the sounds of The Mendocino String Quartet, a remarkable holiday feast, champagne, a selection of Mendocino County’s finest wine, local brews, fireworks (despite the rain), prizes, and more... it really was a great party!

THANK YOU to our dedicated volunteers—all the ticket takers, greeters, spotters, floaters, bartenders, food helpers, parking attendants, store helpers, marshmallow stabbers, and of course all those who helped string the lights with cheer and then pack them away again... until next year!