



Press Contacts: Keith Yazmir, NYC & Company, 212/484-1244, kyazmir@nycvisit.com  
Andy Solomon, U.S. Conference of Mayors, 202/861-6766, asolomon@usmayors.org

## **NYC FIREFIGHTERS DEPART FOR 200 CITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY IN NATIONAL EFFORT TO PROMOTE TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

### **Country's Mayors Salute 9/11 Heroes While Firefighters Deliver Message of Thanks for Nation's Support**

**New York City (March 1, 2002)** – Surrounded by New York City's bravest, NYC & Company President Cristyne L. Nicholas and U.S. Conference of Mayors representatives Mayor Donald Plusquellic (Akron, OH) and Mayor James Garner (Hempstead, NY) gave the official sendoff to 200 New York City Firefighters traveling this weekend to 200 U.S. cities around the country in a national effort to promote travel and tourism and to say 'thank you' for the country's outpouring of support following September 11.

Participating firefighters were nominated to be "New York Ambassadors" by their firehouse captains and were invited to the different cities by those cities' mayors. Destinations range from Surprise, Arizona and Rock, South Carolina to Beverly Hills and Boston. As part of their visits, the New York firefighters will talk to school children, meet local firefighters, serve as parade grand marshals, visit local sights, and much more. In Palatine, Illinois the visiting firefighter will help dedicate a new firehouse. In Pleasanton, California the firefighter will participate in a memorial service for a local victim of the September 11 attack. A complete list of participating cities is available at [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org).

"These men and women represent the best of the Big Apple and they are about to see the best of America, as they visit some of our great cities," said New Orleans Mayor Marc H. Morial, President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. "These trips should set an example for the nation, helping to rebuild consumer confidence, and promote travel and tourism."

"This is an exciting opportunity for New York's Bravest to carry a message to the country from all New Yorkers thanking people for their overwhelming outpouring of support following September 11," said Ms. Nicholas. "Once again leading the nation by example, our firefighters will encourage all Americans to defend and enjoy our basic right to travel while delivering a personal invitation to the country to come visit us back in New York City."

Travel and tourism was responsible for \$1.2 trillion in spending nationwide, making it the country's third largest retail sales industry behind automotive dealers and food stores. In 2000, tourism supported 19.3 million jobs throughout all 50 states, employing one out of every eight people in the U.S. And tourism generated \$99.6 billion in local, state and federal taxes.

According to projections from the Travel Industry Association of America and the U.S. Department of Commerce, final 2001 travel and tourism spending will plummet 8% nationwide, with New York City facing a 15% loss representing more than \$2 billion.

AirTran, American Airlines, Amtrak, Continental, Delta Air Lines, and US Airways donated the bulk of the tickets for the firefighters, each of whom are bringing a companion. Additional tickets were provided by ATA, Frontier, Jet Blue, National, Northwest, Southwest and Spirit Airlines.

NYC & Company provided each firefighter with an Official NYC Visitor Guide and Map as well as a listing of NYC Fun Facts. The U.S. Conference of Mayors provided yellow gift bags filled with fun and helpful travel items. The bags were provided by Prepared Response, Inc. and included calling cards from AT & T, bottled water from American Water Works and shaving cream from Bloomingdale's and Zirh. And most of the firefighters are bringing gifts and mementos from their firehouses to share with the groups they will be meeting with in their destination city.

### **NYC & Company**

NYC & Company – the Convention & Visitors Bureau is New York City's official tourism marketing agency. A private, non-profit organization with a current membership of more than 1,300 businesses, the Convention & Visitors Bureau has been in operation since 1935. Its principal mission is to enhance New York City's economy through tourism development by marketing the city on a worldwide basis.

### **U.S. Conference of Mayors**

Founded in 1932, the U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

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