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For more information, contact

Lydia Young, Page Communications
816-384-2952, lydia@pagecomms.com

**The Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association announces
Restaurateur and Company of the Year for annual leadership dinner
Sept. 30, with Lidia Bastianich as keynote speaker**

*Annual event celebrates restaurant-industry leadership and education, featuring scholarships
and the unveiling of more awards at state-of-the-art culinary center*

KANSAS CITY, MO. (Sept. 1, 2015) – Kansas City’s restaurant industry will celebrate the leadership of Kevin Timmons, co-owner of Nick and Jake’s, as Restaurateur of the Year and Excel Linen Supply as Company of the Year at this year’s annual Gilbert Robinson (GR) Dinner. The Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association (GKCRA)’s annual awards event will return Sept. 30, featuring additional awards and scholarships unveiled that night as it celebrates restaurant industry leadership at the internationally-recognized Hospitality & Culinary Academy at Johnson County Community College (JCCC).

Continuing the theme of leadership, this year’s event will feature a keynote address from celebrity chef and restaurateur Lidia Bastianich, owner of a flourishing food and entertainment business, including Lidia’s Kansas City. Bastianich’s address will focus on inspiring future leaders in the restaurant industry.

“The Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association is honored to have such an icon of our industry present at an event celebrating the future leaders of Kansas City’s vibrant and thriving hospitality community,” executive director for the GKCRA Shannon Hickey said.

State-of-the-art Location

The Grand Hallway of the multi-million dollar Hospitality & Culinary Academy is the setting for this year’s event from 5:30 – 9:00 p.m. The GKCRA and its members supported the development of the academy at JCCC, choosing this location to further emphasize its commitment to the education of future culinary leaders. The center features seven kitchens, five culinary labs, a demonstration kitchen and more, specializing in programs for chef apprenticeship, food and beverage management, hotel and lodging management, pastry/baking and dietary management.

Culinary Experience

Guests will experience and explore the award-winning state-of-the-art culinary facility with windows in to the staging kitchens and resources available to the next generation of restaurant industry leaders. The Culinary Team of Lidia’s Kansas City will create and provide the menu for the evening.

GKCRA Awards

The GR Dinner recognizes the outstanding contributions to the Kansas City restaurant industry by businesses and individuals, including this year’s Restaurateur and Company of the Year awards.

Restaurateur of the Year, Kevin Timmons, Co-Owner of Nick and Jake’s: From a young age, Kevin has worked in the restaurant industry, from washing dishes in the kitchen to opening restaurants. Locally, Kevin opened Nick and Jake’s in July 2001, and has since opened two additional Nick and Jake’s restaurants in the greater Kansas City area that give back to the community.

Company of the Year, Excel Linen Supply: Founded in 1931, Excel Linen has been owned and operated by the Joseph F. Brancato Family since 1974. With the help of his boys and many great employees, Excel Linen has become a leader in the Kansas City hospitality linen rental industry. Today, Excel Linen serves a 100-mile radius of Kansas City businesses, including 16 routes with more than 1,200 customers.

Industry Leader Awards

In addition to the Restaurateur and Company of the Year awards, leaders in the Kansas City restaurant industry are nominated each year by employers and peers. Winners in the 14 categories represent the highest honors in the Kansas City restaurant community, and will be unveiled at the Sept. 30 event.

Scholarship Awards

Each year, the GR Dinner honors the future of the restaurant industry with the presentation of eight scholarships to area students pursuing careers in the hospitality industry. The scholarships range in amounts from \$500-\$2,000 and are hand-picked each year by members of the GKRCRA board through essays and interviews.

Tickets, Student and Table Sponsorships

Individual tickets are available for purchase by calling (816) 753-5222, including a \$150 Individual VIP ticket with a VIP meet and greet and autographed book by Bastianich, \$50 per individual ticket and \$25 for student tickets. All tickets must be purchased by Wednesday, Sept. 23.

For the second year, event attendees can again purchase sponsorships for tables, as well as student scholarship winners and their educators. Levels of sponsorship are as follows:

- **\$800 VIP Table Sponsor:** includes eight seats, six tickets to the VIP reception with Lidia, a signed book, table and event signage, program and GKRCRA promotional media
- **\$600 Table Sponsor:** includes eight seats, table and event signage, and GKRCRA promotional media
- **\$350 Reception Sponsor:** includes two seats and recognition in event signage, program and GKRCRA promotional media
- **\$100 or \$200 Student Sponsor:** includes sponsorship of two students for \$100 or four students for \$200, and recognition in event signage

About Gilbert-Robinson

The Gilbert Robinson Dinner celebrates a standard of excellence set by former Kansas City restaurant firm, Gilbert-Robinson. Founded in 1961, the Kansas City-based restaurant company became a national leader in the industry with distinguished innovations in menu, decor and service. The group created several legendary concepts in the Kansas City market including Houlihan's, Bristol Seafood Grill, Fedora Café and Bar, Plaza III and Fred P. Ott's.

About Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association

The Greater Kansas City Restaurant Association (GKRCRA) is a trade association with more than 600 members consisting of restaurants, caterers, hospitals, schools, institutions, clubs and in-plant cafeterias as well as vendors serving the local restaurant industry. Members work together to represent, educate and promote the restaurant and hospitality industries in the Missouri counties of Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte and Kansas counties of Johnson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte. For more information on the GKRCRA, "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GKRCRA or follow GKRCRA on Twitter at www.twitter.com/GKRCRA.

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