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For more information contact:

Communication Manager, Holland Hayden

479-238-0921

hhayden@siloamsprings.com

City of Siloam Springs Wins Two Awards from Arkansas Business Magazine

Friday, December 4, 2015 (*Siloam Springs, Ark.*) The City of Siloam Springs won two awards at the Arkansas Business magazine “Cities of Distinction” awards banquet Tuesday night. It was named the winner in two categories- tourism development and workforce development in the 5,000-20,000 population size.

The awards were announced at the Arkansas Municipal League winter meeting in Springdale on by Mitch Bettis, Publisher of Arkansas Business.

The tourism award recognized the City’s broad tourist attractions – the historic downtown, John Brown University, bike and pedestrian trails, Sager Creek- and focused on the new Kayak Park. The Kayak Park is the first of its kind in both the City and the northwest Arkansas region, with nothing like it anywhere within an eight-hour drive. Funded by the Walton Family Foundation and maintained by the City, the park has been enthusiastically embraced by the Northwest Arkansas Chapter of the Arkansas Canoe Club, and has hosted canoe club visitors from Colorado, Florida, New York and Utah, as well as individuals from all five adjoining states enjoying kayaking, canoeing, swimming and picnicking.

The workforce development award lauded local efforts to address the current workforce shortage in manufacturing. The Chamber of Commerce, based on visits to industry and feedback on their needs, cooperated with the Siloam Springs School District to create the new charter school- dubbed “Career Academy of Siloam Springs”, or CASS. With curriculum designed to encourage high school students to choose career paths in local industry and manufacturing jobs, the potential employee pool coming from the CASS program motivated 15 local and regional industries to pledge well over \$1 million to build a classroom/laboratory facility on the high school campus. Classes in the building began in September. The hope is for students successfully completing CASS to see the merit in pursuing a career that does not require a four-year degree and to remove the stigma associated with “hands-on” manufacturing jobs.

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