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MCCA RECEIVES AWARD FOR DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

*MCCA's Weekend of Discovery program honored by Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce,
The Ad Club*

BOSTON- The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA) today announced that it received the 2008 Arnold Z. Rosoff Award in the category of "Marketing to a Diverse Audience" for its "Weekend of Discovery" program that promotes Boston as a top destination for minority-based conventions and meetings. The award will be presented by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and The Ad Club at an awards luncheon today.

"The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority is honored to receive this award named for someone who cared so deeply about diversity," said James E. Rooney, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority. "We created the Weekend of Discovery program to overcome decades of ingrained perceptions of Boston's ability to host diverse conferences and meetings and to present the city as a welcoming, enjoyable destination for all."

"The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority has created a thoughtful and innovative marketing program that not only makes good business sense but encourages greater diversity in our city," said Paul Guzzi, President & CEO of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. "We are glad to honor the Weekend of Discovery program, which truly captures the spirit of the Rosoff Awards."

"We are very pleased to honor the MCCA's Weekend of Discovery program with the Arnold Z. Rosoff Award for Marketing to a Diverse Audience," said Kathy Kiely, President of The Ad Club. "The Weekend of Discovery is a wonderful example of promoting diversity while marketing a product that serves the needs of a diverse audience."

The Weekend of Discovery initiative was created by the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority and implemented by the MCCA's marketing division, Advantage Boston, to counter outdated perceptions of Boston and market the city as top destination for diverse conventions and meetings. Each year, meeting planners of minority-based associations and trade groups are invited to Boston as special guests of the MCCA and greeted by senior elected officials, including the Governor and Mayor, and business and cultural leaders from the African-American, Latino, and Asian communities who act as Boston's ambassadors answering questions and assuring participants that their membership will find Boston a welcoming destination.

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“Participating in the MCCA’s Weekend of Discovery program as an ambassador to association leaders from communities of color visiting Boston, gives me the opportunity to show what Boston has to offer in terms of culture and history to their diverse membership,” said Representative Linda Dorcena Forry of Boston. “The Weekend of Discovery Program is doing much to bring important meetings and conventions to Boston while improving the image of the city in the minds of diverse audiences across the country.”

Aside from the standard tour of convention facilities and hotels, Weekend of Discovery participants are given a tour of the streets and neighborhoods their membership would travel if they convened in Boston as well as cultural and historical points of interest, which allows them to see Boston as a modern and diverse city. The weekend ends with the participants attending the Dimmock Community Health Center’s “Steppin’ Out” gala where the visiting group sees the diversity of Boston’s social scene as they gather to support an institution dedicated to the inner city communities.

The Weekend of Discovery has led to the MCCA booking major minority-based conventions such as the Asian American Journalists Association that will meet in Boston in 2009, and the National Blacks in Government conference that will convene at the Boston Convention & Exposition Center in 2011. The initiative is also continuing to change outdated notions of Boston. When asked, 85 -90 percent of minority meeting planners say after their experience on the Weekend of Discovery, they would consider booking their meeting in Boston or their perceptions of Boston have been greatly changed.

The Ad Club and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce established the Rosoff Awards in 1996 to recognize and reward diversity initiatives that have had a positive economic or social impact. The awards are named for Arnold Z. Rosoff, founder of Arnold Worldwide and a zealous supporter of diversity in the workplace.

The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority owns and oversees the operations of the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, the John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, the MassMutual Center in Springfield, MA and the Boston Common Parking Garage.

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