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**The 2018 National Cherry Blossom Festival Goes to the Dogs**

*For the first time, Festival to become pet-friendly through partnership with Mars Petcare*

**Washington, DC** (March 1, 2018) – The signature Washington, D.C. springtime event – The National Cherry Blossom Festival – is teaming up with Mars Petcare, the world's leading pet nutrition and health care business, to get pet-friendly.

Guided by Mars Petcare's BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ program, a key initiative that advocates for fewer pets in shelters, more pet-friendly places, and happier, healthier lives for both people and pets, the National Cherry Blossom Festival will partner with Mars Petcare to make select signature events “pet-friendly” by providing dogs who attend with their owners the necessities they need while on-the-go.

Throughout the Festival, which attracts millions of visitors from around the world, pet owners can visit pet comfort stations featuring waste bag distribution, treats, shade, and water stations using bowls with potable water to keep dogs hydrated and out of the sun, as well as educational resources for pet owners on responsible pet ownership and the importance of creating more pet-friendly spaces.

“We applaud the National Cherry Blossom Festival for recognizing the need and importance for more pet-friendly activities and opportunities for dog to join their owners at major events,” said Jam Stewart, vice president of corporate affairs for Mars Petcare. “Pet-friendly amenities are critical at events such as this, but also in urban areas throughout the country. Our partnership is one way we are taking concrete steps to gain learnings and provide solutions to the challenges that pet owners face in many communities as we work to make it easier for people and pets to enjoy life together.”

Pet services provided during the Festival include:

- *Saturday, March 24 to Sunday, April 8 (10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. daily):* At the **Tidal Basin Welcome Area**, pet comfort services will be available, including waste bag distribution, treats, water stations using bowls with potable water, as well as a pop up tent with information on the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ program.
- *Saturday, March 31 (10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.):* At the **Blossom Kite Festival** on the grounds of the Washington Monument (17th St NW & Constitution Ave), pet comfort services will also be available, including waste bag distribution, treats, and water stations using bowls with potable water, as well as a pop up tent with information on the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ program.
- *Saturday, April 7 (1:00-8:00 p.m.):* At **Petalpalooza** taking place at the Wharf, Mars Petcare will provide an interactive pop-up park at The Wharf entrance near Hanks, including an enhanced pet comfort station, treats, water and shade for attending dogs, as well as information on responsible pet ownership. Attendees will also have an opportunity to meet and adopt dogs from the Humane Rescue Alliance from 1:00-4:00 p.m., Washington, D.C.'s premier animal welfare organization and one of Mars Petcare's local partners.

“We realize the important role that pets play in so many of our attendees lives, and with the help of Mars Petcare’s BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ initiative, we are excited to enhance the Festival experience by introducing new pet-friendly amenities throughout our events,” said Diana Mayhew, President of the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Attendees of the Festival will also have the chance to learn more about the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ program, which Mars Petcare launched last year to create enough places for every dog and cat to live, visit and play by supporting shelters, homes, businesses and parks. The BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ movement supports Mars Petcare’s overall Purpose: A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS and aims to create a culture where everyone understands the value pets have on health through emotional comfort and support, increased health benefits such as reduced depression and stress in adults, and cognitive and social development in children. Pets are an important part of their families – now in more than 84 million households – and trends such as increased urbanization and many young adults choosing pets over having kids highlights a need to help communities across the country address hurdles to pet ownership, which the program intends to eliminate.

Before attending, Festival attendees should visit [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/paws](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org/paws) for more information and to determine if their dog is Festival friendly before making the trip.

Additionally, to join the BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ movement, get more information about Mars Petcare, and access resources such as the [Playbook for Pet-Friendly Playbook](#) to help create more pet-friendly communities, visit [www.bettercitiesforpets.com](http://www.bettercitiesforpets.com).

#### **About BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™**

BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™ is a program of Mars Petcare US, the world’s leading pet nutrition and health care business, created to help communities become more pet-friendly by bringing the voice of pets and their owners to places of influence and advocating for fewer pets in shelters, more pet-friendly places, and happier, healthier lives for both people and pets. Mars Petcare works with key partners, businesses and local governments to better understand how to improve communities by: providing safe and welcoming shelters that lead to forever homes; encouraging pet-friendly, responsible homes for pets; welcoming more pets into local businesses, and giving pets plenty of park space to play. For more information about Mars Petcare and BETTER CITIES FOR PETS™, visit [www.bettercitiesforpets.com](http://www.bettercitiesforpets.com).

#### **About Mars Petcare US**

Mars Petcare is the world’s leading pet nutrition and health care business. A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS™ is the vision statement held by Mars Petcare as we believe that pets make our lives better and that pet ownership brings joy and benefits which should be accessible to everyone. In the United States, Mars Petcare food brands include PEDIGREE®, IAMS™, ROYAL CANIN®, GREENIES™, CESAR®, NUTRO™ and SHEBA®. Veterinary practices include BANFIELD™ and BLUE PEARL™. Specialty brands include WISDOM PANEL™ Canine DNA Tests and WHISTLE™ GPS Pet Tracker. The company’s WALTHAM™ Centre for Pet Nutrition is a leading scientific authority on pet nutrition and wellbeing. Mars Petcare has more than 37,000 Associates worldwide. For more information about Mars Petcare’s vision: A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS™, visit [www.bettercitiesforpets.com](http://www.bettercitiesforpets.com).

#### **About National Cherry Blossom Festival**

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation’s greatest springtime celebration. The 2018 Festival, March 20 – April 15, includes four weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. Visit [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org) or call 877.44.BLOOM for more information, or check out [Facebook](#) (CherryBlossomFestival), [Twitter](#) (@CherryBlossFest), and [Instagram](#) (@CherryBlossFest).