



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Deron Cherry to Lead American Royal Parade**

Former Kansas City Chief and 6-time NFL Pro Bowl selection, Deron Cherry, has been named Grand Marshal of the 84<sup>th</sup> annual American Royal Parade.

The parade is Saturday, September 26 in downtown Kansas City. This year's theme is "Educating Youth...Riding for a Reason," a celebration of the American Royal mission supporting youth and education. "Through his foundation, Deron Cherry has been a long time advocate for educating youth with his 'Score One for Kids' health screening program," said Jim McNair, President and CEO of the American Royal. "His parents both were teachers. Honoring Deron Cherry as our Grand Marshal is in step with our theme for this year's parade."

Cherry played strong safety for the Kansas City Chiefs from 1981 – 1991. He has remained active in the Kansas City area with the Deron Cherry Foundation and as managing general partner with United Beverage, a local Anheuser-Busch distributor.

The parade, presented by Phillips 66, steps off at 10 a.m. and journeys along a route that was expanded last year into the Kansas City Power & Light District. All units begin at Pershing Road and Grand Blvd, run north on Grand, continue past Truman Road into the Kansas City Power & Light District, turn west at 14<sup>th</sup> and Grand, ending at 14<sup>th</sup> and Main. A post-parade awards ceremony will be held at 1 p.m. on the stage in the District's Live! area.

The parade has grown in recent years, due to an earlier, weather-friendly date and the addition of new attractions such as the Shriners and parade balloons. Three area Shriners groups, Ararat, Abdullah and Moila, bring more than 50 performing units, greatly expanding the size of the parade! Their well-known fun and colorful style includes a small armada of mini-vehicles running through their intricate maneuvers – a sight that delights parade goers young and old.

New this year is a one-of-a-kind trio of large floats known as Cowboys of the Old West 1880's Cattle Drive, providing a colorful and detailed exhibit of that bygone era. The floats include antique cowboy gear and related memorabilia, as well as a display honoring Native Americans with art, music and artifacts. The mannequin horses were created using actual horsehair; the floats include an "End of the Trail" Hotel Barbershop and covered wagon.

In addition to the 50 units of Shriners, there will be approximately 125 marching bands, drill teams, saddle clubs, balloons, civic groups and parade floats. Many of the floats celebrate the parade's education theme, honoring The American Royal's commitment to fostering the development of young Americans in the wide variety of agricultural fields.

"We are once again pleased to be able to present the parade as a kick-off to the 3-month American Royal season when the weather typically makes for a premium parade experience," said McNair. "Adding the Power & Light District to the route last year was a great enhancement that we're happy to continue, as we include more units going through the District."

*The American Royal, a not-for-profit 501c3 organization that benefits youth and education, is now its 110th year and celebrates our region's rich agricultural heritage through competition, education and entertainment. In 2008, the organization contributed more than \$1.5 million in financial support in the form of scholarships, educational awards, educational programs, community donations, competitive awards and prize monies and premiums. The American Royal, one of Kansas City's premier fall events with annual economic impact of more than \$65 million, hosts the world's largest barbecue contest, one of the Midwest's largest livestock exhibitions, one of the top five ranked rodeos in the nation and is home of the national championship horse competition.*

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