



**INITIAL DETAILS ANNOUNCED FOR THE WAWA WELCOME AMERICA JULY 4TH CONCERT
STARRING GLOBAL SUPERSTAR MARY J. BLIGE**

***New Concert and Broadcast Times; Earlier Fireworks at 9:30 p.m.; Boyz II Men Honored;
Kidz BOP Kids Returns for Early Afternoon Concert, and the Premier of the Philly POPS BIG Band***

PHILADELPHIA, PA (APRIL 21, 2017) – Welcome America, Inc. and Live Nation Philadelphia announce the first details of the **2017 Wawa Welcome America** six-day festival Thursday, June 29 through Tuesday, July 4. The theme of this year’s 25th Anniversary *Wawa Welcome America* is “Everyone is a History Maker.”

Musical pioneer and “the Queen of Hip-Hop Soul,” **Mary J. Blige** will headline for the first time the **Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert**. Blige has made music history with a record eight multi-platinum albums, nine Grammy Awards (plus a staggering 32 nominations), a 2012 Golden Globe nomination, and five American Music Awards. Blige is a global superstar who sells out arenas around the world. She has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide. Among female R&B singers, only Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston have sold more albums.

The *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert* will honor Philadelphia hometown icons Boyz II Men, the best-selling R&B group of all time with an astounding 64 million albums sold. The trio has earned four Grammy Awards, nine American Music Awards, nine Soul Train Awards, three Billboard Awards, a Star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame, and in 2011 a MOBO Award for Outstanding Contribution to Music throughout their 25-year career. In 2013, the iconic group began a residency in Las Vegas at The Mirage Resort and Casino in which they received a Casino Entertainment Award. Boyz II Men will also appear at the “Celebration of Freedom Ceremony” at 10 a.m. on July 4th at Independence Hall where the City of Philadelphia will officially recognize their historic achievements in music and philanthropy. Last year *Wawa Welcome America* and the City of Philadelphia honored the legendary music of the Sound of Philadelphia and Gamble and Huff.

Marking the 25th anniversary of *Wawa Welcome America*, performing in the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert* will be the Philly POPS® BIG Band. The POPS were the first performers at the very first free concert on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in 1993. The Philly POPS BIG Band will be joined by **Mandy Gonzalez** from the Tony Award-winning hit musicals *Hamilton*, *In the Heights* and *Wicked*, and Billboard top 10 jazz singer, pianist and songwriter **Tony DeSare**. The BIG Band will set the tone with several patriotic standards and then perform a set of recent popular hits. The Philly POPS is a fixture at Philadelphia’s celebrations of civic significance. The POPS BIG Band specializes in infusing the best of American popular music with a spirited, swinging presentation.

Additional *Wawa Welcome America* entertainment, festival information and details about 50 free events for 2017 will be announced in the coming weeks.

“Each of these artists are history makers in their own right,” explained **Mayor Jim F. Kenney**, Chairman of Welcome America, Inc. “We are thrilled to welcome them back to Philadelphia and to be able to host a free concert that all Philadelphians can enjoy.”

New times for the concert and fireworks

The *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert* on Independence Day is free, open to the public and begins promptly at 7 p.m. It culminates with one of the largest and most beautiful fireworks displays in the country at 9:30 p.m. The event is held on the iconic Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia.

The event will be broadcast live on NBC10 and in Spanish on Telemundo62 plus streamed live to your devices

NBC10 will broadcast the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert and Fireworks* live during primetime in its entirety from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Tuesday, July 4th and in Spanish on Telemundo62 from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. NBC10’s coverage of the concert will be simulcast on Cozi TV and TCN, as well as in Spanish on TeleXitos from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. The free concert will also be live streamed on www.nbcphiladelphia.com and www.telemundo62.com and can be viewed on any screen – TV, iPad or tablet, smartphone, etc. Comcast NBCUniversal is the presenting media partner of the festival providing exclusive service ranging from broadcast to communications.

“Through NBC10 and Telemundo62’s extensive coverage of *Wawa Welcome America* on multiple platforms, we are elevating the scope of the event for more people to experience the iconic celebration of the Independence Day holiday in Philadelphia,” said **Ric Harris**, President and General Manager of NBC10 and Telemundo62.

For families with young children, KIDZ BOP Kids return for an early afternoon concert

To appeal to families with young children, for the second year, KIDZ BOP Kids will perform live on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in the early afternoon on the main stage. KIDZ BOP Kids record kid-friendly versions of today’s biggest pop music hits sung by kids, for kids. They are the number one music brand for kids in the U.S. and have sold over 16 million albums in 15 years. This concert will not be broadcast.

“We are excited to once again partner with Welcome America, Inc. to produce the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert*,” said Live Nation Regional President **Geoff Gordon**. “The 2017 lineup of artists will appeal to a broad audience and have viewers both on the Parkway and at home singing and dancing along.”

For 25 years, Welcome America, Inc. has produced the annual *Wawa Welcome America* multi-day festival celebrating American history, education and Philadelphia. The 2017 festival will continue providing a wide range of free cultural programming, books to inner-city children, free museum entry as well as America’s largest free Independence Day concert, multiple world-class fireworks displays, outdoor movie screenings, community events and more in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Additional entertainment, festival information and details about 50 free events for 2017 will be announced in the coming weeks. Visit www.welcomeamerica.com to learn more, and join the conversation at:

- Facebook – www.facebook.com/WawaWelcomeAmerica
- Twitter – www.twitter.com/July4thPhilly
- Instagram – www.instagram.com/July4thPhilly

About Welcome America, Inc.

Welcome America, Inc. is a 501c3, non-profit organization in public-private partnership with the City of Philadelphia. Welcome America, Inc.'s mission is to promote American history, education and Philadelphia. The organization seeks to enhance the resident and visitor experience through citywide events that provide an economic boost to the local economy. Moving forward, Welcome America, Inc. may produce and assist in the growth of select city events year-round.

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