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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

***GEP Opens 2008, its 10<sup>th</sup> Year, with Bold Moves to Further Enhance its Position as the DMC Industry Leader Worldwide***

**Distancing itself from the Competition: GEP Announces a New Risk Management Standard, the Formation of GEP Utah and Seven New Partners**

Washington, D.C. (January 17, 2008) . . . Global Events Partners (GEP), this year celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the leading partnership of destination management companies (DMCs) worldwide, announced a bold series of moves designed to further accelerate the growth of its partnership, bolster its company-owned DMC portfolio and connect even more closely with the meeting professional community through an important new performance standard.

Chris White, Chairman and CEO of GEP, announced the following initiatives:

- (1) **Creation of new risk management standards**, in response to meeting professionals' need to have adequate coverage for events.
- (2) **The formation of GEP Utah**, following the acquisition of the DMC Division of Western Leisure.
- (3) **The addition of seven new partners**, in key international and U.S. destinations.

**New Risk Management Standards for U.S. DMCs**

Responding proactively to the needs of meeting professionals, White announced that GEP DMCs in the U.S. will now assume due diligence for ensuring proper risk coverage connected with events – removing that burden from the shoulders of planners. The new standards were unanimously approved by U.S. DMCs at GEP's annual "Best Practices" meeting in Dallas in November.

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Attending the meeting was Steve Levin, Senior Vice President at The Berkely Group, which provides insurance exclusively for the travel and meeting industries, whose role was to assure that the components of the new standards protect the best interest of all parties involved.

Levin said, "I applaud GEP for taking these strides and moving in this direction. This kind of initiative is what the meeting industry needs to ensure that all appropriate parties are well protected. Meeting Planners should feel comfortable in utilizing the services of a DMC who has implemented these standards."

Effective immediately, all GEP U.S. partners will adopt the following new risk management standards:

- Maintain current certificates of insurance of all key suppliers for a minimum of \$1million in liability.
- Require key suppliers to name the GEP DMC involved in an event as additionally insured.
- Conduct at least one annual meeting with key suppliers to reiterate safety and service expectations and to review insurance and vendor agreements.
- Require a signed supplier agreement asserting compliance with all laws, ordinances, licenses, permits, rules and regulations, and service levels commensurate with the highest standards of the industry.

White said, "We are proud to announce these standards, which are unique in the DMC industry and which once again position GEP as the organization most in tune with the needs and requirements of the meeting professionals." He concluded, "We are sure these standards will go a long way toward alleviating a longstanding concern with risk management within our industry."

For a complete list of all GEP performance standards, please visit:  
<http://www.globaleventspartners.com/gep-worldwide-partners.php>

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**Formation of GEP Utah**

White also announced the acquisition of the DMC Division of Western Leisure, a 25 year-old company based in Salt Lake City, which will be rebranded and restructured to become GEP Utah.

In addition to Salt Lake City, GEP Utah plans a regional expansion that will include satellite offices in Deer Valley-Park City and Moab, Utah; Sun Valley, Idaho, and Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Along with the satellites, GEP Utah's primary mission is to leverage the emergence of high-end corporate meetings and incentive business in these markets, each of which has become a leading four-season meeting destination, with world-class hotel, cultural, and recreational offerings.

GEP Utah will continue to offer the finest in DMC services, specifically to corporate and incentive groups, under the direction of Ellen Birrell, CMP, who was announced as President of the office. Birrell is a veteran of the Utah hospitality industry, who has held senior management positions at the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau and Snowbird Resort, among other organizations.

In addition to Utah, GEP owns and operates market-leading DMC offices in other important U.S. destinations, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia and South Florida.

For more information on GEP Utah, please contact:

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## **Seven New GEP Partners Covering 14 Destinations**

GEP also announced that seven new Partners have joined the GEP partnership, representing fourteen important destinations around the world.

The new Partners and the destinations they represent, include:

### **International**

- \* *Borealis Destination Management* – representing Denmark, Sweden and Norway
- \* *Desert Adventures Tourism* – representing Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar
- \* *Excel Travel S.A.E.* - representing Egypt
- \* *Iceland Congress* – representing Iceland
- \* *Odyssey International Incentives and Meetings* – representing Ireland
- \* *WELCOME TEAM TRAVEL* – representing Southern France

### **U.S.**

- \* *Destination Concepts inc* - representing San Diego and Orange County, CA

Each of the new GEP DMC Partners has a long history of operating as a trusted, leading DMC in the markets they serve – and, under GEP’s standards of excellence, each was hand-picked and carefully screened, based on track record, exemplary service and reputation. Each has extensive local knowledge and resources, and specializes in designing and executing group tours, transportation, events and program logistics.

The new Partners entering the GEP system bring the total number of GEP DMC Partners to 65, representing more than 92 destinations worldwide.

For more information or to contact any of the new GEP Partners, please go to <http://www.globaleventspartners.com/gep-worldwide-partners.php>.

### **About Global Events Partners (GEP)**

Launched in 1999, Global Events Partners’ portfolio includes 65 leading destination management companies (DMCs) around the world. A DMC is a professional services company possessing extensive local knowledge and resources, specializing in the design and execution of group tours, transportation, events, activities and program logistics. GEP partners provide consistently high quality DMC services in the most desirable locations worldwide. For more information on Global Events Partners, visit [www.globaleventspartners.com](http://www.globaleventspartners.com).

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