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MEDIA CONTACTS:

MELANIE HUSTEAD
WRA
MHUSTEAD@WRALLP.COM
(443) 224-1770 (OFFICE)
(443) 388-1478 (CELL)

NANCY MATHIS
FIRST TAKE COMMUNICATIONS
NM@FIRSTTAKECOM.COM
(202) 364-0782 (OFFICE)
(202) 255-1960 (CELL)

Local Company, Mike Rowe Keep Date with City Event One of Few Not Cancelled; Significant Show of Support for Baltimore's Recovery

(Baltimore, MD) Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP (WRA), a privately-owned engineering and architectural firm founded at the beginning of World War I, announced that its 100th year anniversary celebration -- featuring Baltimore's own Mike Rowe -- was held at the Maryland Science Center this past Thursday evening, May 7th. The announcement came on the heels of news that the city's curfew had been lifted and evening activities could resume, as scheduled.

Joe Makar, the firm's managing partner noted, "This is a time when all of us who care deeply about our city and are committed to its long-term success need to stand together and send the same message -- 'Baltimore is back in business'." He continued, "We knew a lot of events had been cancelled and there was going to be a big economic impact on the city and the people who work in the hospitality and tourism industries. Mike Rowe felt the same way we did about going forward, so we committed to stick with our plan, just as we have stuck with Baltimore for the last 100 years."

Rowe, host of CNN's "Somebody's Gotta Do It" and Discovery Channel's "Dirty Jobs," was WRA's guest of honor and keynote speaker at the 100th anniversary event. That same evening, "Somebody's Gotta Do It" featured two segments on Baltimore. The program aired at 9PM on CNN.

"It's hard to watch my hometown go through such a difficult time and painful to see it portrayed in such a narrow way. Baltimore has been good to me, and I'd like to return the favor by showing the rest of the country what makes it such a special place."

Rowe added, "Baltimore is the beneficiary of great engineering and design and a lot of hard work-- from our Inner Harbor, to our roads and tunnels, to our skyline, to our docks." He continued, "These massive projects demanded commitment, skill and courage from many people over many years, especially the folks at WRA. I'm grateful as a beneficiary of their work and honored to participate in the event recognizing them and encouraging others -- especially now - to follow in their footsteps."

The WRA 100th celebration also focused on the need to attract more young people into engineering and architecture. Students and faculty from one of the inner-city schools that WRA supports -- the NAF Academy of Engineering on North Caroline Street -- were guests at the dinner.

Additionally, LEGO Artist Mariann Asanuma, based in San Diego, California, sprang into action minutes after the museum closed at 5pm that day to put the finishing touches on a 15,000-piece LEGO sculpture of Baltimore's skyline.

"Our profession needs more diversity in its workforce," remarked Makar. "If we can help interest children in engineering early on and then support that interest through the high school years and on into college, two important outcomes result. We will have a workforce ready to meet the challenges of the future, and we will have connected parts of our city in working towards a common goal: the success of our children."

WRA's own beginnings were anchored in water. In the 1900's, as a typhoid epidemic swept through the Baltimore area claiming thousands of lives, water treatment problems prompted a public health crisis and city leaders recognized the need for a long-term solution. Ezra Whitman served as the city's lead engineer during design and construction of the critically-needed Montebello Water Treatment Plant. A short time later, he formed the firm and subsequently joined forces with Gustav Requardt. Just as the firm has endured, Montebello is still operational today and has provided a clean water system for generations of Baltimoreans.

Through the years, Whitman & Requardt's engineering and architectural expertise played a pivotal role in projects essential to the region's growth including: Friendship Airport; the Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion; Penn Station's expansion; the Harbor East promenade; the growth of Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab campus; the Woodrow Wilson Bridge replacement project; and support and expansion of U.S. Department of Defense installations worldwide; and the system that provides water to Ocean City, Maryland - one of the most popular vacation destinations in the region.

WRA also engineered a role for itself in Baltimore's urban renewal. In 2000, the company became the first major local firm to establish its headquarters in Harbor East. WRA's long-term commitment to the area was an important boost to the community, and today, Harbor East is a thriving mixed-use neighborhood.

"In many ways, we have stayed true to our beginnings," said Makar. He continued, "We believe we can, and should, play a part in making sure that Baltimore, our State and our region have a strong infrastructure that is engineered for the future and able to respond to growth and change."

WRA has two offices in the city of Baltimore that employ more than 400 people. It also has thirteen satellite offices throughout the country including offices in Delaware, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Texas. It has been nationally recognized by *Engineering News Record* as one of the top 200 engineering firms in the country.

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