

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Bizarre Foods* Star Andrew Zimmern Helps The Council on Recovery Raise Nearly \$500K to Fight Alcoholism & Addiction in Houston**

**HOUSTON, Texas (May 3, 2017)** – Culinary superstar Andrew Zimmern, host of the Travel Channel's popular *Bizarre Foods*, inspired and entertained a crowd of 1,000 with his personal story of addiction and recovery this past Friday at the Hilton Americas-Houston. In the process, he helped The Council on Recovery raise more than \$470,000 to provide addiction, prevention, education, and treatment services in the Greater Houston area.

Zimmern was the keynote speaker at the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Luncheon in The Waggoners Foundation Speaker Series presented by the Wayne Duddlesten Foundation. The Luncheon also honored local businessman and long-time Council board member, Gary Petersen, with The Council's first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of Petersen's commitment, dedication, and service for over two decades.



The Luncheon was co-chaired by Cathy Herrington Hale and Julie Goudie.

Zimmern praised The Council on Recovery's work, telling the audience, "What you have here in Houston is truly special, it's very unique. I travel all around the world and I do a lot of service work in recovery communities...and this is one of the most special groups that I have ever run across: The ability to carry the message of hope to young people where it really needs to be carried. And to have the majority of your programs stay rooted in what recovery really is, one addict or alcoholic sharing with another, it's just an incredible thing."

Though, early in his career, Zimmern helped open and run a dozen restaurants, he was also an addict and alcoholic spiraling out of control. Crashed and burnt, he lost his home and spent a year living on the streets, stealing to support his addiction, ultimately leading to one last intervention by close friends. That brought him to the renowned Hazelden Foundation in Minnesota. Transforming his life around sobriety, Andrew began work again washing dishes and bussing tables at the Minneapolis

outpost of New York's Café Un Deux Trois restaurant in 1992. When a line cook fortuitously didn't show up for his shift, Andrew took over his station, and in seven weeks was named Executive Chef, changed the menus, and turned Un Deux Trois into one of America's first successful gastro-bistros during his six year tenure.

“I did not come into recovery doubting it,” Zimmern said. “I came into my current sobriety begging for what those who came before me had. I knew what it was and I wanted it. You cannot think your way into right acting. Recovery isn't a thinking thing, it's an action thing.”

Twenty-five years after getting sober, Andrew Zimmern actively carries the message of hope and recovery everywhere he goes and to everyone he can help. His inspirational message to the people gathered at The Council's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Luncheon touched everyone in the room and left many wanting to do more to help those in Houston who suffer from alcoholism, addiction, and co-occurring mental health disorders.

Luncheon guests included Gary Petersen, Tom Brown of the Hamill Foundation, Kathy McGovern, Rachel and Jeff Bagwell, Ellen and John Rutherford, Rob Arnold, Jack Daniel, Charlene Slack, and Jim and Jerri Moore. The Council also honored Board member, Angela Pisecco, with the Jay Waggoner Service Award.

June Waggoner and late husband Virgil are the benefactors of The Waggoners Foundation Speaker Series in honor and memory of their son, Jay Waggoner, whom they lost to alcoholism. Since the luncheon series' creation in 1999, it has attracted nearly 33,000 people and raised over \$13 Million. Past luncheon speakers include Patrick Kennedy, Ashley Judd, Tom Arnold, Lynda Carter, Paul Williams, Richard Dreyfuss, Jamie Lee Curtis, Jim Belushi, and Earl Campbell.

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**About The Council on Recovery:** Founded in 1946, The Council on Recovery is Houston's oldest and largest non-profit organization providing the full spectrum of prevention, education, intervention, treatment, and recovery services for individuals of all ages. The Council on Recovery is committed to helping Houston overcome the addiction epidemic through a focus on family healing and long-term support that is equally accessible to all in need. Directly touching over 50,000 lives each year through prevention programs for children and youth, in-school and clinical counseling for teens, outpatient substance abuse treatment for adults, and more, our mission is to provide the highest quality of care at affordable rates for individuals and their families. Affiliated with the United Way of Greater Houston, The Council receives funding from private contributions and grants, special events, and program fees. For more information, visit [www.councilonrecovery.org](http://www.councilonrecovery.org).