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*For Immediate Release*

**THE WINGS CLUB FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES GARY C. KELLY  
AS ITS 2017 DISTINGUISHED ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
RECIPIENT**

**\*\*To Be Presented at the 75<sup>th</sup> Awards Gala in October\*\***

**New York, NY – (March 29, 2017)** – This year, The Wings Club Foundation, Inc., will honor Southwest Airlines' Chairman of the Board, and Chief Executive Officer, Gary Kelly, with the 2017 Distinguished Achievement Award. Acknowledging outstanding accomplishments in the field of aviation, The Wings Club Foundation will present this award on October 20, 2017, at the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Gala to be held at the New York Hilton Midtown in New York City.

Under Gary Kelly's leadership, Southwest Airlines has grown to become the nation's largest airline in terms of originating domestic passengers carried and is a mainstay on *Fortune* magazine's list of the most admired companies in the world, ranking eighth in 2017.

As a Southwest veteran, Kelly began his career 31 years ago as Controller, moving up to Chief Financial Officer and Vice President Finance, then Executive Vice President and CFO, before being promoted to CEO and Vice Chairman in July 2004. Gary assumed the roles of Chairman and President in 2008. Prior to joining Southwest Airlines in 1986, Gary was a CPA for Arthur Young & Company in Dallas and Controller for Systems Center, Inc.

His biggest source of pride is the fact that Southwest Airlines has never had a single furlough in the airline's 46-year history. He has pioneered the airline's transformation

through several key initiatives, including the acquisition of AirTran Airways, the repeal of the Wright Amendment, and the launch of international destinations for the first time in Southwest's history; all while staying true to the Company's core values and people-centric culture.

Throughout his career, Kelly has received numerous awards and recognitions, most recently as a 2016 inductee into the Texas Business Hall of Fame, and recipient of the prestigious 2016 Tony Jannus Award. He was named to *Fortune* magazine's Top 20 People in Business in 2014; was twice named *D CEO Magazine's* CEO of the Year; one of the best CEOs in America by *Institutional Investor* magazine three times; and selected as *Dallas Business Journal's* CEO of the Year for 2011. In 2010, Kelly was honored with the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Texas at Austin, and in 2013, he was inducted into the McCombs School of Business Hall of Fame at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition, he received the 2013 Father of the Year Award; and was the recipient of the 2013 McLane Leadership in Business Award at Texas A&M University. Kelly is a current member of the Business Council and the Southwestern Medical Foundation Board of Trustees.

The [Wings Club's Distinguished Achievement Award](#) has been presented annually since 1975. Notable past recipients include Neil Armstrong, Senator John Glenn, President George H. W. Bush, Brigadier General Charles E. Yeager, Frederick Smith, Steven Udvar-Hazy, T. Allan McArtor, and W. James McNerney, Jr., as well as 13 present and former airline CEO's including, Robert Crandall, Herbert Kelleher, Gordon Bethune, Sir Colin Marshall, Wolfgang Mayrhuber, Sir Richard Branson, and Dave Barger.

[The Wings Club Foundation, Inc.](#) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Its mission is to focus on initiatives aimed at supporting scholarships for students pursuing a career in aviation or aerospace; providing programs to educate in the field of aviation and supporting charitable organizations that use aviation to help those in need. The Wings Club Foundation serves over 1,300 members including industry leaders, pilots, professionals in related service organizations and students of aviation.

Recognizing significant achievements that contribute to the advancement of aviation and aeronautics, The Wings Club Foundation presents not only the [Distinguished Achievement Award](#), but also the [Outstanding Aviator Award](#) and the [Distinguished Scholar Awards](#). For more information please call (212) 867-1770, e-mail [wingsclub@aol.com](mailto:wingsclub@aol.com) or visit [www.wingsclub.org](http://www.wingsclub.org).

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