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For Immediate Release

Levitt Pavilion Westport Opens Its New, State-of-the-Art Venue This Sunday

*Lead capital gift of \$4.5 million from the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation
helps turn vision into reality*



July 18, 2014---Marking a new chapter in the history of a treasured music venue that sparked a movement across America, the original Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts in Westport, Conn., will re-open Sunday, July 20, 2014 as a brand new, state-of-the art complex. The new pavilion was made possible in part by a lead capital gift of \$4.5 million from the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt

Foundation – the largest single gift in the foundation's history.

“We are extremely proud of Levitt Westport's 40 year history and its beloved reputation as a community treasure, open to all,” said Liz Levitt Hirsch, president of the Levitt Foundation and board chair of Levitt Pavilions. “The new facility is a beautiful reflection of its special place in our hearts, and we're thrilled that the Levitt Foundation's lead gift is helping to ensure the joy of free, live music for the people of Westport and surrounding communities for decades to come.”

The generous funds provided by the Levitt Foundation made it possible for the independent, Friends of Levitt Pavilion nonprofit led by longtime Executive Director Freda Welsh, to proceed with groundbreaking, in addition to receiving contributions from the town, state and private donors. To date, the Friends of Levitt Pavilion has invested close to \$9 million in the transformation of their outdoor facility.

The grand re-opening concert this Sunday will feature nine-time GRAMMY Award Winner **Jose Feliciano** to celebrate the new venue and kickoff Westport's summer concert season. The ribbon cutting ceremony is slated for 6pm, where Mimi Levitt (who has served on the Levitt Westport board since its inception) and Liz Levitt Hirsch, as well as local and state dignitaries and Friends of Levitt Pavilion leadership, will be honored on stage. The concert begins at 7pm. Due to the extraordinary high demand for the opening concert, free tickets were issued in advance. Audience members must remember to bring their free ticket with them.

This summer's line-up is bursting with talented musicians such as jazz fusion band, **Incendio** (7/31), World folk band, **Sultans of Strings** (8/21) and GRAMMY-winning **Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks** (8/17). Levitt Westport will also present a special children's series and a 'Celebration Sunday' series showcasing award-winning artists such as **The Hot Sardines** (7/27) and **Heartbeat Dance Band** (8/10).

The new venue features state-of-the-art amenities and services for audiences and artists alike such as a lush RiverWalk and picnic grove, perfect for pre-concert picnics and activities. Graceful, sail-shaped canopies cover the performance stage, which also has vastly updated technical abilities, furthering Levitt Westport's capacity to attract world-class artists. The complex also includes park areas and a community hospitality center where patrons can find food, drink, and indoor restrooms.

Levitt Westport has been an anchor of the community and local economy for decades. Forty years ago, Mortimer and Mimi Levitt, summer residents of Westport, were approached to support a project to transform the town dump along the Saugatuck River into a community gathering space for the performing arts. Mortimer and Mimi were major benefactors to the project, and much to their surprise, the venue was named after them in recognition of their generous gift.

"I remember opening night forty years ago," mused Mimi Levitt. "The whole town showed up. And on that night it was announced that it was going to be named the Levitt Pavilion. We were just overwhelmed, as we had no idea that [the naming] was going to happen. And it all started because the recreation director was looking for something for teenagers to do on weekends."

Today, the reimagined Levitt Pavilion will once again dazzle audiences and continue to fulfill Levitt's mission to strengthen the social fabric of our communities through the power of free, live music. Inspired by the original Levitt Pavilion, the Levitt network has grown to include six venues (with an additional two in development) located in Los Angeles and Pasadena, Calif.; Memphis; Arlington, Texas and Bethlehem,

Pa.; and future venues slated for Denver and Houston. Taken together, Levitt venues present the largest free concert series in America with over 300 concerts every year.

About Levitt Pavilions

Levitt Pavilions is a national nonprofit organization that exists to strengthen the social fabric of America. We partner with cities to transform neglected public spaces into welcoming destinations where the power of free, live music brings people together and invigorates community life.

Levitt Pavilions is the only national network of outdoor music venues, collectively presenting the largest free concert series in America. The Levitt program is six cities strong—in places as diverse as **Los Angeles** and **Pasadena**, California; **Westport**, Connecticut; **Bethlehem**, Pennsylvania; **Memphis**, Tennessee; and **Arlington**, Texas—collectively serving more than half a million people annually through 300+ free, family-friendly concerts. Each Levitt venue is its own 501(c)(3) Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization, presenting 50 free concerts every year featuring acclaimed, emerging talent to seasoned, award-winning performers in all music genres.

Due to accelerating interest from cities and engaged citizens, the Levitt program is growing. Developing Levitt locations across the country include **Denver** (opening 2016) and **Houston** (opening 2017), amongst other cities.

To learn more, visit www.levittpavilions.org

About the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation

The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation is a private family foundation, founded in 1963 by Mortimer and Mimi Levitt to support the arts, culture and education. Since 2012, Liz Levitt Hirsch has been its president and is overseeing a period of significant growth. Today, the main focus of the Foundation is its venture philanthropy program, partnering with cities through the development and support of Levitt pavilions across America.