**Half Moon Bay’s 50th Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off**

**The Super Bowl of Weigh-Offs Monday, October 9**

This year marks the milestone 50th anniversary of Half Moon Bay’s now world-famous **Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off**

When:  Oct. 9; 7 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Where:  IDES Grounds, 735 Main Street, Main St, Half Moon Bay CA

Bring it on burly, beefy, bodacious behemoths! The excitement is building in Pumpkintown as the World’s Greatest Gourd Growers and their Goliath, mind-bending, Rhinoceros-sized orange orbs orbs hope to squash the world record on **Monday, October 10** at the **50th Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off** –– the “Super Bowl of Weigh-Offs” –– in the World Pumpkin Capital of Half Moon Bay, California. Using a pay-by-the-pound system, the world’s biggest top prize of $9/pound will be awarded to the 2023 weigh-off champion thanks to title sponsor, Safeway. Also at stake are thousands of dollars in super hefty prize money doled out to the top 20 plus the big carrot: a $30,000 total mega-prize for a new world record pumpkin entered at Half Moon Bay (the current world record is 2,703-pounds set at a 2021 weigh-off in Italy).

Defending champion Travis Gienger's leviathan 2,560-pound mega-gourd set a new North American record and handily won the 2022 Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off in Half Moon Bay. A host of accomplished veteran growers are expected to contend for the coveted title. The champion will be feted and play a starring role in the world-famous Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival, Oct. 14-15 (including a free weekend at the posh, pumpkin-centric Ritz-Carlton on the stunningly beautiful Half Moon Bay coast) and also receive the inaugural Pumpkin King Champions Ring and Mel Mello Sr. Grand Champion Growers Jacket. Beauty will share center stage with beefy brawn with a $1000 prize awarded for the “Joe Cotchett Family Most Beautiful Pumpkin” as judged by the audience based on color, shape and size.

The grand champion gourd (along with the top four overall) will be on display plus there's a special weigh-off champion pumpkin photo booth at the Half Moon Bay Art & Pumpkin Festival, October 14-15, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Main Street.

Admission is free. Open to the public.

**The History:** Sometimes a little seed can go a long way. What started out in 1974 as a fun, light-hearted contest between Circleville, Ohio and Half Moon Bay, California, two cities proclaiming to be the Pumpkin Capital of the World, has grown into Half Moon Bay’s Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off, the Super Bowl of pumpkin weigh-off competitions worldwide.

Lore has it that while visiting Half Moon Bay in 1974, Frank Barnhill, then mayor of Circleville, Ohio, was deeply impressed with the prolific and passionate local pumpkin-growing culture. He met with then Half Moon Bay mayor, Al Adreveno, and they agreed to have their two proud pumpkin-loving cities square off in the first head to head pumpkin weigh-off, hauling the largest local gourds to their historic city halls for the official weighing competition. Once concluded, the two mayors got on a phone call to announce their respective winning weight and grower. To formalize the proceedings, county ag representatives officiated both weigh-offs to make things official. That first year, Half Moon Bay’s biggest pumpkin, 132-pounds, grown by John Minaidis, won by one pound. Half Moon Bay brought home the coveted title of Pumpkin Capital of the World that very first year and a legend was born.

**New Additions this Year:** The organizing team announced some of the special flourishes in the works to celebrate its fascinating story and proud history.

There are dazzling, one-of-a-kind rings to honor NFL, World Series, and NBA champions and now there is Half Moon Bay’s one and only Pumpkin King Champions Ring that will be awarded to the winner along with the $9 per pound top prize and the coveted Mel Mello Sr. Grand Champion Growers Jacket.

The spectacular ring is designed and sponsored by Josh Warshauer, second generation owner of Goldworks on Main Street in Half Moon Bay. The ring is sterling silver with the weigh-off logo in a 14kt yellow gold top plate with the winner’s name and pumpkin weight engraved on the inside.

The organizing team also announced the kick-off of a special Weigh-Off Wall of Fame Mural and Plaque Project that will be installed on the Cunha’s Market wall on Kelly Avenue.

Coastside artist Julie Engelmann, who created the remarkable landmark mural in 2022 to honor the 50th Pumpkin Festival, has designed and will begin painting a new adjacent mural to frame and surround the special bronze cast Weigh-Off Wall of Fame Champions Plaque and Honorary Inductees Plaque.