

## Press Release

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### **J.H. Whitney Capital Partners Acquires Firebirds International**

NEW CANAAN, Conn., Jan. 8, 2019 /PRNewswire/ — J.H. Whitney Capital Partners, LLC is pleased to announce that it has acquired a majority interest in Firebirds International, LLC (“Firebirds Wood Fired Grill” or the “Company”) from Angelo, Gordon & Co., L.P. (“Angelo Gordon”). California-based NorthPoint Advisors served as financial advisor to Firebirds. Kirkland & Ellis LLP served as legal advisor to J.H. Whitney. Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Charlotte, N.C.-based Firebirds Wood Fired Grill is a contemporary-polished casual restaurant with 48 locations throughout the U.S. and is known for its authentic wood fired entrees infused with bold flavors, fresh herbs and spices. This year, Firebirds was named one of America’s Top 50 Emerging Restaurant Chains by FSR Magazine and one of Nation’s Restaurant News’ “Next Gen Top 20.” Firebirds has a history of outperforming industry SSS and AUV benchmarks with proven success across different markets and plans to accelerate its growth across the continental United States with the support of J.H. Whitney.

Firebirds’ CEO Mark Eason, a highly regarded restaurant industry veteran with nearly 40 years of experience, will continue in his current role.

“Firebirds’ guest-first culture and various industry recognitions are reflective of our continuous investment in our team members and customers. J.H. Whitney’s willingness to invest in the long-term success of our brand and their alignment with our core values make them the ideal partner to help us execute our growth strategy,” said Eason. “We are very pleased to have J.H. Whitney’s experience, resources and team of professionals supporting Firebirds.”

“Firebirds is a unique brand that has a distinguished and proven track record of profitability and growth and is run by a management team that is one of the most dynamic in the industry,” said Paul R. Vigano, J.H. Whitney Senior Managing Director, about the acquisition. “We are excited to partner with Mark and the Company’s talented management team to help accelerate the Company’s growth.”

Founded in 2000, Firebirds Wood Fired Grill offers guests a unique dining experience featuring an exposed kitchen with its signature wood-burning grill, and its award-winning FIREBAR®. The restaurant is known for its welcoming décor and expertly seasoned wood-grilled steaks, freshly grilled seafood, gourmet burgers and oversized salads, as well as an extensive menu of seasonal cocktails and fine wine. For more information about Firebirds Wood Fired Grill, visit <https://www.firebirdsinternational.com>.

### **About J.H. Whitney**

J.H. Whitney, established in 1946 by industrialist and philanthropist, John Hay “Jock” Whitney, was one of the first U.S. private equity firms and is often credited with pioneering the

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development of the private equity industry. Today, J.H. Whitney remains privately owned by its investing professionals and its main activity is to provide private equity capital to small and middle market companies with strong growth prospects in a number of industries including consumer, healthcare, and specialty manufacturing. Visit: <http://www.whitney.com>.

### **About Firebirds Wood Fired Grill**

Firebirds Wood Fired Grill, a contemporary-polished casual restaurant, is an energetic twist on the traditional grill featuring a boldly flavored, classic American menu in an inviting, fire-centric atmosphere. Signature menu items include hand-cut, aged steaks and fresh seafood hand-fileted in-house and seared over locally sourced hickory, oak or pecan wood in Firebirds' scratch kitchen and exposed wood-fired grill. The open, stylish, enticing décor incorporates wood-fired themes and entertaining spaces, such as the outdoor patio with seasonal comforts and the award-winning FIREBAR®. Popular specialties include Wine Down Mondays, happy hour, artisan cocktails, craft beer, bourbon, after dinner drinks and Firebirds' private label wine. In keeping with its mission, "To Serve, Enrich and Exceed," Firebirds supports ever-growing sustainability efforts throughout its restaurants and partners with Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, with more than \$1.4 million raised for childhood cancer research through the sale of fresh-squeezed lemonade. Visit [firebirdsrestaurants.com](http://firebirdsrestaurants.com) to become a member of Firebirds' Inner Circle, make an OpenTable reservation or order ToGo online.