



City of Slidell

Dept. of Cultural & Public Affairs • Press Release for Immediate Release

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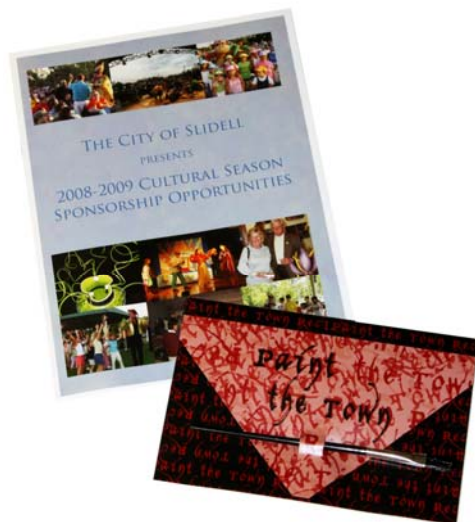
SLIDELL'S CULTURAL AFFAIRS CAPTURES TWO MORE NATIONAL AWARDS

The City of Slidell's Department of Cultural & Public Affairs has taken home first and second place awards in two categories in this year's Savvy Awards competition sponsored by the City-County Communications and Marketing Association, or 3CMA. The awards recognize outstanding local government achievements in communications, public-sector marketing and citizen-government relationships.

This year, the Savvy Awards were presented in Scottsdale, Arizona, in a ceremony held on September 24 in conjunction with the association's annual conference. Slidell was represented at the event by Slidell City Councilwoman-at-Large Kim Harbison and Department of Cultural & Public Affairs Director Kim Bergeron.

The Cultural Affairs department captured the first place "Savvy" award in the category of Marketing/Community Issues for its Cultural Season Sponsorship Opportunities brochure. The category included cities with populations of up to 850,000. Slidell edged out other finalists, Castle Rock, Colorado and Gainesville, Florida for the first place award.

Judges called the sponsorship packages a "very impressive use of internal resources. Very creative work with a great return on a minimal investment." The brochures, which highlighted the city's cultural season and sponsorship opportunities, were created in-house using photographs taken by the department staff and a color copier. Printed at a cost of approximately \$85.00, the project ultimately brought in over \$50,000 in support from local businesses and individuals.



The department also took home a second place award in the category of "Most Creative with Least Dollars Spent" for the Mural Week V.I.P. invitations, with finalists ranging in population from 16,500 to 720,000. Of this entry, judges said, "Very, very neat! Loved the great visual - interactive - received good media attention. Proof that artistic endeavors can indeed be fun to promote...and effective!"

The invitations were also created in-house using a color copier at a total cost of about \$50.00. Each included a small paint brush, encouraging guests at the mural opening reception to add their own creative strokes to the legacy artwork. The mural, which has since been completed, was created by world-renowned artist Phil Galatas. It was funded by private donations and

fundraisers, and supported and administered in part by a grant from the St. Tammany Commission on Cultural Affairs/Department of Cultural and Governmental Affairs, St. Tammany Parish. Refreshments for the reception were provided at no cost by Dish on First Restaurant.

Mayor Morris, who is a staunch supporter of the arts, was delighted to learn of the city's awards. "This is yet another opportunity for us to showcase Slidell on a national level," he stated.

Cultural & Public Affairs Director Kim Bergeron agreed. Of the first place award, she added, "The real credit here goes to the many cultural season sponsors who recognize the value of the arts in our community. These are the people who 'get it.' They understand that cultural events help us create a sense of community, attract tourists and encourage businesses to set up shop in Slidell. The impact, both intrinsic and financial, is tremendous."

Bergeron stated that the category of "Most Creative with Least Dollars Spent," is among her favorites, because it gives the department an opportunity demonstrate how much can be done with a minimal budget. "We're often competing against cities with individual project budgets of \$25,000 to \$50,000 or more. To receive awards for projects that cost us less than \$100 is really gratifying."

The city offers over 40 cultural events a year at a cost of less than one percent of the annual budget. "I defy anyone to find another city that offers so much for its citizens at so little cost," stated Mayor Morris. "And according to the office of Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, the cultural economy is the state's second largest industry, with nearly \$6 is returned to local and state government coffers for every \$1 invested. That's a remarkable return on our investment."

During the conference, Bergeron was a co-presenter in a Social Media workshop, demonstrating the city's many efforts to ensure effective crisis communications, via website modifications, "Slidell TV", Twitter and Facebook. "When Hurricane Katrina hit, we were not prepared for the communications blackout that followed," she told conference attendees. "We now have a complete arsenal of social media services we can use to keep our citizens informed, both before and after a crisis. And best of all, they're free," she stated.

This is the eighth year that the City of Slidell and its Department of Cultural & Public Affairs has been honored for its marketing efforts by the City-County Communications and Marketing Association, and the fourth year Bergeron has been invited to present a session at the national conference. Slidell was the only Louisiana municipality to receive awards at the conference.

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