



City of Slidell

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

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Citizens invited to become part of auditorium's Final Curtain Call

End of an era marks the beginning of arts organization

It's been the home to an impressive array of cultural events, arts-in-education performances, carnival balls, dance recitals, holiday parties and trade shows. It has provided a safe haven for high school graduation parties and staged the way for countless fundraisers. But this month, the Slidell Municipal Auditorium will close its doors for the last time—but not without one more opportunity for the community to reflect and recall some of their favorite memories that took place within its walls. It's time for "The Final Curtain Call," and the community is invited to become part of this momentous occasion.

The auditorium was substantially damaged by the flood waters of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Since that time, the debate between Slidell Mayor Ben O. Morris and FEMA included the issues of repairs versus rebuilding, with FEMA even suggesting at one point in time that floodwalls be built to surround the facility. Morris ultimately won that part of the debate, and FEMA agreed to forego floodwalls and fund the majority of the rebuilding costs. Morris chose Sizeler Thompson Brown Architects to design the replacement facility, which is anticipated to open in 2011. Demolition of the auditorium is anticipated to begin next month—but not before a final celebration.

"I am pleased to announce the creation of a new organization—Friends of the Arts," said Morris. "I think it's so apropos that this non-profit organization dedicated to the arts is hosting their inaugural event in conjunction with the end of a cultural icon."

The new Friends of the Arts Board includes Co-Chairs Nicole Burkes and Stacy Zechenelly, Stephanie Landry, Margo Guilott, Dorable Dangerfield, Marina Stevens, Jenifer Besh, Stephanie Berault, Leslie Paulsen, Terri Parks, Ann Labauve, Karen Smith and Lisa Clement. The Friends of the Arts will provide support and assistance to the City of Slidell and its Commission on the Arts in promoting cultural projects presented by the City of Slidell.

"The creation of the Friends of the Arts organization has been one of our department's goals for quite a few years now," said the city's Director of Cultural & Public Affairs Kim Bergeron. "We are so blessed to have this incredibly dynamic board bringing this dream to fruition, to help us ensure that the arts continue to make our community such a great place to live. What a tremendous gift to our citizens!"

The event the new organization is planning in conjunction with the Friends of the Arts kick-off is "The Final Curtain Call." Citizens are encouraged to share some of their favorite memories of events held in

the auditorium by bringing copies of photos, newspaper stories, event programs and even memories they have jotted down about some of their favorite times in the auditorium. Memorabilia may be delivered through Thursday, March 18, to the Department of Cultural & Public Affairs in the city's Municipal Trailer Complex, 1330 Bayou Lane Trailer 104. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. As items cannot be returned, citizens should bring copies or duplicates of memorabilia they wish to share. "The Final Curtain Call" memorabilia be displayed in the auditorium on Saturday, March 20, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

The memorabilia will remain on display through that evening for the Friends of the Arts Charter Member's Gala, an event to be held from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. in the auditorium. The event will feature culinary creations presented by Chef John Besh and an exotic bar featuring Resurrection Wine, Funf 5 Riesling, CatDaddy Carolina Moonshine, ChocoVine, Relax Cool Red Wine and Abita Beer. Guests will enjoy live entertainment by the Ronnie Kole trio, with a special cameo appearance by John Perkins, one of the city's Commissioners for the Arts, and former member of the popular band, The Crew Cuts. Rounding out the evening's festivities will be retrospective video presentation compiled by *The Times-Picayune* staff.

Charter Memberships to Friends of the Arts are \$50 per person, and each donation of \$50 or more will include one complimentary admission to the gala. As an added bonus, the first 100 Charter Members of Friends of the Arts will receive a special, limited edition "Celebrate Slidell" lapel pin. Arts enthusiasts may also opt to support the Friends of the Arts mission by becoming Supporters of the Arts with donations of \$10 to \$49.

Membership applications are available at the City of Slidell's Department of Cultural & Public Affairs; The Purple Armadillo, 58465 Tyler Street, Suite 7; and Accents and Things, 3056 Gause Blvd. East. Applications will also be available at the free Bayou Jam concert and community celebration featuring the Topcats, to be held Sunday, March 14, from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. in Heritage Park. Checks should be made payable to "Friends of the Arts," and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

The last component of "The Final Curtain Call" event is a social media challenge. Anyone whose life has been enriched by any of the events held at the auditorium is encouraged to share those memories on the Friends of the Arts' Facebook page, on its Final Curtain Call event page. It's a great opportunity for parents and grandparents, some of whom may not yet be savvy in social media, to sit down with their children or grandchildren and share these stories, which the children can then add to the Facebook page. Because so many of the auditorium events centered around families, the Facebook option provides an opportunity to bring the memory-sharing full circle—and it also provides a convenient way for everyone to enjoy reading about these memories from the comfort of their home computers.

"It's all about the memories," said Morris. "I look forward to strolling down Memory Lane with all of our citizens, and to the great things I know are beginning with our new Friends of the Arts organization. It's going to be spectacular."

The Friends of the Arts' Final Curtain Call gala is sponsored by Chef John Besh, Ronnie Kole, *The Times-Picayune*, Abita Beer, Select Brands, Inc., STARC Linens and the City of Slidell. For more information, call Nicole Burkes, (985) 643-5508, or Stacy Zechenelly, (985) 639-9362. Following "The Final Curtain Call," memorabilia will be donated to Guardians of Slidell History to become part of the GOSH Museum's permanent collection. The museum is located adjacent to City Hall in Olde Towne Slidell.