



# City of Slidell

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

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## PRESS RELEASE

September 13, 2010

For Release: Immediate

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## Slidell's Cultural Affairs Department Takes Home Top Honors at national 3CMA Conference

*Cultural Affairs Director also elected to Board of Directors*

Last August, when the City of Slidell's Department of Cultural & Public Affairs challenged elected officials and community business leaders to become artists for a day, the resulting "Super Bowl Exhibit" and auction wowed audiences and netted over \$12,000 in funding for the city's outdoor mural project. Now those efforts have earned the department two prestigious national 3CMA (City-County Communications and Marketing Association) Awards: a first place Savvy Award for the city's marketing efforts, which garnered tremendous publicity, and a second place Silver Circle Award for the Cultural Extravaganza and Super Bowl Auction. Slidell was the only Louisiana city to take home a Savvy Award from the conference, which was held September 8 – 10 in Atlanta, GA. In both categories, Slidell beat out other cities with populations of up to 800,000 and budgets of up to \$40,000.

The awards mark the third time in less than a year that the city's cultural programming has garnered national attention for Slidell. In November of 2009, the City of Slidell brought home the National League of Cities' Gold Award for Municipal Excellence for its arts programs and cultural economy development efforts. Joining Slidell in the Gold Award Winning Circle in their respective population categories were the cities of Savannah, GA, Long Beach, CA and New York, NY. It was the first time any Louisiana city has received this prestigious award.

More recently, the city was selected as one of Americans for the Arts "100 Local Arts Index Cities," an 18 month study which will focus on strong local arts leadership and local innovative arts programs, and will use a comprehensive approach to measure the health and vitality of the local cultural economy.

Clearly, Slidell's art scene is an integral part of what makes the city such a great place to live.

"We feel really blessed to have a community that embraces the arts as an essential part of life," said Kim Bergeron, Director of Cultural & Public Affairs. Bergeron is quick to credit her staff of two full time employees, Media Specialist Alex Carollo and Administrative Secretary Susan Schmidt, whom she calls "the hardest working staff on the planet." The three-person team orchestrates the City of Slidell's entire cultural season, which includes the Bayou Jam Concert Series, Some Enchanted Evening with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Arts Evening, Kids Fest, Christmas Under



## CULTURAL AFFAIRS WINS AWARDS – ADD ONE



the Stars, special events, arts-in-education programs, art exhibits in the Slidell Cultural Center gallery at City Hall, and the city's annual Cultural Extravaganza arts fundraising event. The gallery's recent exhibit, "The Blue Dog Days of Summer: George Rodrigue from the New Orleans Museum of Art," drew thousands of visitors from throughout the Gulf Coast region and beyond, and the upcoming international exhibit, "Voices: Contemporary Ceramic Art from Sweden," is anticipated to draw many more visitors to the area.

"More and more people are sitting up and taking notice of Slidell and all that it has to offer," said Mayor Freddy Drennan. "It's important for people to realize that these cultural events help bring tourists to our area, and help attract new businesses. They provide a tremendous economic impact, which is more important than ever in this current economic climate. It's good business, and a great way to strengthen our community."

Bergeron says the city is grateful for the city's Commission on the Arts, its Cultural Season Sponsors, and the Public Operations, Recreation and Police departments for their contributions toward the cultural programs. "This award is a tribute to them, to all of the artists and arts organizations who participate in our events, and to all of the elected officials and community business leaders who embraced the Super Bowl challenge," she said.



The city's award winning Super Bowl Exhibit and Cultural Extravaganza are among the Cultural Affairs department's favorite events of the past season.

The numerous painting sessions provided Bergeron an opportunity to discuss the economic impact of the arts with the many participating state legislators as they created works for the auction. "Studies commissioned by the Lt.



Governor's office have indicated that for every \$1 invested in the arts, \$7 is returned to state and local government coffers and \$27 is returned to the local economy. Louisiana's cultural industry also supports 187,500 jobs. These were powerful messages to be able to relay to captive audiences while they were painting," she says. "Of course, it was also great fun watching them enjoy themselves as they rediscovered their inner artists. They were like kids with finger paints!"

As a result of that event, several of the professional artists who created artwork on the oversized bisque "Super Bowls" have added bowl painting to their repertoire, generating more sales for the artists and more work for Kelly Landrum-Hammell, the artist commissioned by the city to create the bisqueware for the event. "It's yet another example of the cultural economy at work," says Bergeron.

The mission of the City-County Communications and Marketing Association is to connect local government innovators to achieve the highest ideals of public service through the power of communications and marketing. At the annual conference, Bergeron was elected to serve on the organization's 2011 Board of Directors. She was also one of the conference presenters, showcasing the city's use of social media (including Twitter, Facebook, and "Slidell TV" on YouTube) for crisis communication. This marks the fifth time Bergeron has been invited to present Slidell programs at the annual conference.

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*Super Bowl "artists" who participated in the award-winning event included:*

*(top to bottom) Chief (now Mayor) Freddy Drennan; Parish President Kevin Davis; Louisiana Representative Greg Cromer and his wife, Peggy; State Senator A.G. Crowe, and his grandson, Beau; Louisiana Senator Jack Donahue and Louisiana Representative Kevin Pearson; Louisiana Representative John Schroder.*