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Slidell Selected to Showcase Cultural Event Sponsorship Program at National Conference of Municipal Leaders

Slidell, Louisiana - The City of Slidell's Department of Cultural & Public Affairs has been selected to showcase its program, "Strengthening the Community and the Economy through the Arts," at the National League of Cities' annual Congress of Cities & Exposition, November 10-14 in San Antonio, Texas.

Celebrating 33 innovative city programs, the 2009 City Showcase offers program representatives from across the country an opportunity to present new and noteworthy ideas to more than 2,500 conference participants.

The City of Slidell is also one of 34 nominees for the National League of Cities' Awards for Municipal Excellence, and one of only two cities in the United States being recognized for arts-related programs. A total of eight awards will be presented, first and second place awards in each of four population categories. Winners will be announced Thursday, November 12, during the Exposition.

The city's Cultural Season Sponsorship programs represent significant partnerships between the city and the private sector, with over 40% of the event funding provided through these donations. The city offers over 40 special events per year with free admission, a benefit made possible through the annual sponsorships, with levels ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 per year.

"For the city to be recognized yet again on a national level for its commitment to the arts is a testimony to how important these events are to our community," said Slidell Mayor Ben O. Morris, who initiated many of the city's current offerings, including the Bayou Jam Concert Series and Some Enchanted Evening with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra in Heritage Park. "These events strengthen the sense of community, enhance our quality of life, and attract tourists and new businesses. All of the city's Cultural Season Sponsors are to be credited their support, and for understanding the intrinsic value and economic impact of the arts."

The Cultural Season Sponsor packages were developed in 2004 by the city's then-Media Specialist, Kim Bergeron, as a means to support the programs. In its inaugural year, the packages raised \$9,000 in funding, a number that has steadily increased every year since its inception.

"I'm pleased to announce that despite the current economy, the city's current Cultural Season funding has exceeded \$73,000 in sponsorships and grants, making it possible for us to expand our offerings," says Bergeron, who is now the Director of Cultural & Public Affairs. "The sponsorships provide businesses and arts patrons an opportunity to give back to the community in a way that really makes a difference."

Community and economic development, sustainability, public safety, recreation, and youth programs are among the variety of municipal programs featured in the 2009 City Showcase. Exhibits include municipalities of all sizes and geographic region.

As one of 25 cities represented, Slidell will have an opportunity to provide in-depth information on how its program was planned and implemented.

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans.

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