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Raymond James Gasparilla Festival of the Arts Celebrates 40 Years of Fine Arts and Crafts

Festival Returns to Riverside on March 6th & 7th, 2010 in Downtown Tampa

TAMPA (December 29, 2009) — One of the nation's premier fine art and craft festivals, the Raymond James Gasparilla Festival of the Arts returns to its riverside roots at the Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park in downtown Tampa on March 6th and 7th, 2010. Celebrating its 40th anniversary, the free, two-day festival will feature exceptional art from established and emerging artists, live musical entertainment and hands-on art activities for children.

Raymond James Gasparilla Festival of the Arts has long been regarded as a prominent cultural event in Tampa, featuring renowned artists from across the nation and internationally as well as rising artists. In 2009, the festival was ranked 24th in the nation for outdoor juried art festivals by *Sunshine Artist*, which is known as "America's Premier Art and Craft Show Magazine."

"Our 40th anniversary marks a turning point in the evolution of Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, Inc. and the Festival itself. As we move back to the riverfront where our rich history began, our experience comes full circle with the beautiful Tampa Museum of Art backdrop representing new beginnings and the longstanding relationship between the two organizations," said John Corso, president of the Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, Inc. Board of Directors.

The 40th anniversary Festival will showcase original work by 300 award-winning, acclaimed artists in 13 media categories, selected from more than 1,200 applicants. The artists will compete in a prominent juried show with cash awards totaling \$75,000, including the coveted \$15,000 *Raymond James Financial Best of Show Award*. The participating artists' work will be juried by Jack Becker, president and CEO of the Museum of Art at Cheekwood Botanical Garden & Museum of Art in Nashville, Tenn. With a significant background in the arts, Becker has served as curator of the Florence Griswold Museum in the center of America's best known Impressionist art colony, Old Lyme, Conn., and worked at the National Gallery of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Arts and Whitney Museum of American Art.

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Encouraging an appreciation of the arts at a young age, the Raymond James Gasparilla Festival of the Arts will once again present the Young Artist Showcase. This year, the Showcase invites children aged five to 12 to visit the Art Collectors in Training (ACT) exhibit where they can purchase a work for a nominal amount of \$5 or \$10. Filled with artwork donated by festival artists, the “kids only” exhibit fosters the development of future art patrons with an emphasis on fun. Each work will include the artist’s name and booth number to encourage a chat with the artist and an art signing. All funds raised by ACT will benefit the Children’s Cancer Center, a Tampa-based nonprofit dedicated to providing educational, emotional and financial assistance to children with cancer or chronic blood disorders and their families. In addition, approximately 30 artists participating in the Festival will present their work or perform an on-site demonstration to students of all ages in select schools in Hillsborough & Pinellas counties on Friday, March 5, 2010.

While celebrating its 40-year history, Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, Inc. remains focused on sustainability into the future with the goal of becoming a carbon neutral event. This year the Festival is reducing its energy consumption through solar generators for the stage and solar powered golf carts for Festival transportation. To reduce waste, the Festival is replacing its use of plastic disposable water bottles in favor of filtered water stations throughout the Festival grounds. Food vendors are also encouraged to use biodegradable and compostable foodware. The Festival will also continue a successful recycling program that began in 2009, diverting 1.5 tons of trash from the landfill through assistance from World One recycling.

“Reducing our environmental impact in downtown Tampa is a major focus for the Festival,” Corso said. “I applaud our dedicated volunteers who continue to find green solutions that advance our mission in this area.”

In addition, the Gasparilla Festival of the Arts has partnered with the Tampa Museum of Art (TMA) to commission a major public art work from American digital light artist Leo Villareal on the facade of the new TMA structure. Premiering at the TMA opening gala on February 4, the work will be on public display throughout the Festival.

The Gasparilla Festival of the Arts is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation dedicated to producing an annual, premier juried outdoor art festival for the enjoyment and education of patrons, artists and guests as well as for the enhancement of the Tampa Bay area’s cultural arts. The non-profit organization relies on support from sponsorships, on-site retail sales and corporate and individual gifts to fund its programs and events. The Tampa-based organization is staffed entirely by volunteers. For more information, visit www.gasparilla-arts.com, email gasparillaarts@yahoo.com or call (813) 876-1747.

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