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Knoxville's 2010 Hispanic Heritage Month Packed Full of Events

Each year, September 15 to October 15 is recognized as Hispanic Heritage Month in the United States. During that time, communities across the nation celebrate Hispanic contributions to American society and culture. Here in Knoxville, there will be plenty of events during Hispanic Heritage Month and an official proclamation from the Governor's office.

The long list of events for this year's celebration include two art exhibits, a cooking contest, cultural expressions, a writing contest, dance and musical performances, and the Hola Festival on October 9, which has moved this year to the 100 block of Gay Street.

The abundance of activities is a reflection of our area's vibrant and talented community. Hispanics are one of the fastest growing sectors of our community, and many are young professionals relocating from other parts of the country. Others have lived in the area for decades and have witnessed first-hand the growing diversity among Hispanics and Latinos, and a tremendous boost in public participation. Last year's Hola Festival attendance was more than 10,000.

"September 16 marks the opening of our local celebrations", said Angela Masini, vice president of HoLa Hora Latina, the festival's organizing group. "The Knoxville Museum of Art is the perfect location for our local Latino artists' exhibit and the kickoff ceremony that launches this month of celebrations." Later in the day, the party moves to Market Square where HoLa has prepared a double feature of events.

Early that afternoon a rice-and-beans cooking contest will challenge restaurants and individuals to prepare a dish full of 'sabor y salud' (flavor and health). The teams will be competing for prizes and a mention on the website www.VidaySalud.com, featuring Dr. Aliza Lifshitz, M. D., the medical expert who frequently appears on the Spanish-language television network Univision.

Demonstrations at Market Square of salsa and Zumba, a dance-exercise program set to Latin music, will encourage children and adults to lead a more active life. The party will culminate with a reenactment of the "Grito de Dolores," which commemorates Mexican independence from Spain. This year marks Mexico's bicentennial celebration of independence.

"It is such a great honor for our HoLa members and our community to count on the support of the Governor's office in declaring this month as a celebration of contributions by Hispanics to the American life here in Tennessee," said Coral Getino, president of HoLa Hora Latina.

The governor's proclamation mentions the contributions of Hispanics since the foundation of our state and our nation. One little-known fact is that Admiral David Farragut, born in Knox

County, was the son of Jorge Farragut, who was born in Spain, and came over to America to fight in the Revolutionary War.

Another event during Hispanic Heritage Month is a dinner and flamenco dance recital by Lucia Arte y Pasión Flamenca, Monday, September 27, at Highland's Grill. Tickets are \$50. This event is sponsored by Knox Heritage, and funds are earmarked for the preservation of Admiral Farragut's birth place on Northshore Drive near Pellissippi Parkway.

The Hola Festival is a free event, fun for people of all ages. It will fill the downtown area from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. with Caribbean sounds, folk dances, colorful traditional costumes and delicious authentic food. "We kept some old favorites and added many new things to the Hola Festival this year," Getino said. "What's exciting for us is that this will be the first festival to be held at the newly finished Art District block in Gay Street."

New events this year include bilingual storytelling, dance lessons, a visit from Nickelodeon's Diego, sponsored by Comcast, as well as children's activities and art. Festival goers will be able to enjoy October's Art Exhibit at the Emporium, entitled "Frutos Latinos", opening October 1. Musical performances include Orquesta MaCuba and a 16-member Aztec dance ensemble, sponsored by the Tennessee Arts Commission.

"Thanks to our generous sponsors and our hard-working volunteers, we are able to offer this event free of charge," said Getino. "However, we are asking everyone who joins us for any of the events this month to please bring rice or beans, or any other non-perishable food items, for the Second Harvest Food Bank."

During the festival, prizes will be awarded to the best English or Spanish essays written by high school students, with the topic "An Inspiring Hispanic Person." Prizes are in honor of Evaristo and Lucy Maldonado Mar, Mexican immigrants who instilled in their children the value of education. Deadline for essay submission is September 24.

HoLa Hora Latina is Knoxville's oldest grassroots Hispanic organization, and has organized festivals marking Hispanic Heritage Month in Knoxville since 2000.

For more information, please contact Coral Getino at (865) 335-3358 or visit www.holafestival.org.