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Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tucson's Best Annual Event returns this December for free holiday celebration

Shop one-of-a-kind, handmade gifts from artists in a variety of styles while listening to live music at Festival of the Arts, set near the beautiful mountain views at Oro Valley Marketplace

Nov. 16, 2011 —Winner of the Best Annual Event in 2011, Festival of the Arts is back this winter for a weekend of engaging arts and entertainment, hosted by Southern Arizona Arts & Cultural Alliance.

The annual Tucson's Best contest, presented by Arizona Foothills magazine, showcases the “greatest businesses and individuals” in Tucson chosen by readers. Festival of the Arts won Best Annual Event against other worthy nominees like Tour de Tucson and Fourth Avenue Street Fair.

The free festival will feature holiday performances, handmade artworks and delicious food, taking place Saturday, Dec. 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A pre-party, tree lighting ceremony will take place Friday, Dec. 2 from 6 to 8 p.m., as a 25-foot Christmas tree, towering over the Marketplace, brightens the evening. The celebration, co-hosted by the Town of Oro Valley, will feature music and dance shows by local schools and a fire pit with s'mores sponsored by Golder Ranch Fire District, along with arts, crafts and sweet treats.

With live music from youth mariachi groups, steel drum high school bands and all-girl singing ensembles, the show offers a unique experience for all ages.

Performances this year also include Old Arizona Brass Band – representing the military and town bands of the western frontier – and The Canal Street Band – playing danceable tunes of the glory years of rhythm and blues by legendary artists from Motown, Stax, Atlantic and other famous record labels.

Santa Claus will take requests from children, while photographers capture those special moments between the jolly old legend and youngsters. Kids can also jump around on play areas and partake in arts and crafts activities.

Food vendors will serve kettle corn, roasted nuts, Italian sausage, Philly cheesesteaks, curly fries, hot veggie sandwiches, fruit smoothies, soft pretzels, gelato and hot dogs.

Attendees can find unique and hand-made holiday gifts all weekend at Festival of the Arts, in jewelry, sculptures, textiles, photography, paintings, candles, glass art, custom wood creations, pottery and ceramics, metal work, clothing and much more.

Oro Valley Marketplace, the first Arizona retail destination integrated with a restored riparian habitat, boasts a trail system feeding into the treasured Catalina Mountains. Opened in 2008, the Marketplace features 800,000 square feet of retail, theatre and dining destinations with water-harvesting features and Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

Weekend Entertainment Line-up

Saturday, Dec. 3

- 10 a.m.** Centerstage - *girl youth singing group*
11:15 a.m. Havin' A Blast - *women's a cappella quartet*
12:30 p.m. Mariachi Corazon De Tucson - *mariachi youth group*
1:45 p.m. The Canal Street Band - *rhythm & blues*
3 p.m. Mariachi El Quinto Sol - *mariachi*

Sunday, Dec. 4

- 11 a.m.** Old Arizona Brass Band - *brass*
12:15 p.m. Mariachi Sensacional - *mariachi*
1:30 p.m. Desert Melodies - *vocal*
2:45 p.m. Catalina Foothills High School Falcon Steel Drum Band - *steel drum*

2011 Winter Festival of the Arts

Tree Lighting Ceremony: Friday, Dec. 2 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Festival: Saturday, Dec. 3 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 4 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Where: Oro Valley Marketplace, southwest corner of Oracle and Tangerine Roads

Cost: Free admission

Details: Shoppers can find unique holiday gifts, including jewelry, sculptures, textiles, photography, framed paintings, hand-made candles, glass art, custom wood creations, pottery and ceramics, metal work, clothing and much more, while enjoying live performances, a Santa Claus appearance, an array of food and tree lighting ceremony.

Online: www.orovalleyfestival.org

Phone: (520) 797-3959

NOTE TO MEDIA: *Photos Available*

Oro Valley Marketplace

The Oro Valley Marketplace is built on a 115-acre site at Oracle and Tangerine roads in Oro Valley. It is the first Arizona retail destination integrated with a restored riparian habitat and boasts a trail system feeding into the revered Catalina Mountains. Opened in 2008, the Marketplace features 800,000 square feet of retail, entertainment and dining destinations. *Find out more online www.orovalleymarketplace.com.*

About the Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance

The Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance (SAACA) is a not-for-profit organization that exists to ensure that, through engagement in arts and culture, our communities produce strong, inspired citizens. SAACA enlists artists, businesses, governments, and individuals to expand artistic and cultural opportunities in their respective communities. To enhance access to the arts and to promote cultural awareness in the communities it serves, SAACA presents large-scale festivals, events and other programs. The Alliance also promotes educational opportunities in the arts and culture for both the young and the old.

Organization History

The Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance (SAACA) grew out of the Greater Oro Valley Arts Council (GOVAC), an organization established in 1997 to provide artistic and cultural opportunities for residents of northwest Tucson. GOVAC eventually became one of the largest arts organizations in the region. In 2009, owing to its success, the group expanded its mission to include creation of partnerships with business, governments, and communities throughout Southern Arizona that would encourage innovative, creative cultural expression in the arts for years to come.

For more information about programs and events produced by the Southern Arizona Arts and Cultural Alliance, go to www.saaca.org.
