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NEWS RELEASE

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AUGUSTA SYMPHONY LEADS CAMPAIGN FOR 2009 SPLOST BALLOT TO FUND CULTURAL ARTS COMPLEX

Augusta, Georgia... On **Monday, September 15**, Board and executive leadership from Augusta's cultural arts organizations meet to launch a unified campaign to seek support of a 2009 SPLOST ballot for construction of a new, multi-purpose cultural and performing arts center in Augusta. Senator Tarver will be in attendance, and Mayor Copenhaver has also been invited to attend. **The meeting is from 4 – 6 p.m. at the Morris Museum of Art. For additional information about the meeting, contact Sandra Self at 706.826.4705.**

The September 15 meeting is the result of a May 2008 meeting between Mayor Deke Copenhaver and Administrator Fred Russell with Symphony Board leadership. At the meeting, Mayor Copenhaver and Commissioner Russell agreed with Augusta Symphony officials that citizens of Augusta- Richmond County as well as the city's numerous cultural and performing arts organizations need and deserve a new cultural arts complex. An appropriate venue for cultural and performing arts events does not exist in Augusta; the Imperial Theatre (800 capacity), Bell Auditorium (2200-2500 capacity) and James Brown Arena (7,000 capacity) lack the acoustics, aesthetics, functionality and versatility needed to fulfill the needs of Augusta's diverse arts organizations. Copenhaver and Russell urged the Augusta Symphony to lead the cultural arts organizations in a unified effort to secure the support of Augusta-Richmond County residents and include funding for the new complex on the November 2009 SPLOST ballot.

Leaders of Augusta cultural organizations are rallying behind the campaign for a new cultural arts complex in downtown Augusta. Augusta Tomorrow, an organization committed to Augusta's continued advancement, considers the campaign a "top priority." Augusta Symphony Executive Director Sandra Self commented, "A cultural arts complex in Augusta-Richmond County would enhance property values, tax resources, and overall profitability. Not only would it contribute to the urban and rural revitalization of this area, but would also be a focal point, a source of pride for our community." Mayor Copenhaver, County Commissioners, the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Augusta, and Augusta Convention & Visitors Bureau all agree with the summation of a recent report presented by the National Governors Association entitled "The Role of the Arts in Economic Development" regarding the importance of the arts and the impact on the local economy. The report states that "Cultural activities attract tourists and spur the creation of ancillary facilities such as restaurants, hotels, and the services needed to support them... In doing so the arts become a direct contributor to urban and rural revitalization."

Discussion about the development of a new performing arts complex will be based on the planning, funding, and construction of the [Schermehorn Symphony Center](#) in Nashville, TN; [The Peace Center](#) in Greenville, SC; and the [River Center](#) in Columbus, GA. All three complexes were funded using different sources and feature different characteristics.

Augusta Symphony

The Augusta Symphony is the premier provider of orchestral music for the Central Savannah River Area. In its 54-year existence, the Augusta Symphony has grown into the area's premier performing arts organization, annually presenting the Masterworks, Pops, Family, and Columbia

County Music Series. The Symphony also maintains an active community presence through its outreach services: *Music to the People*, Aiken Symphony Guild Series, Children's Concerts, and the *Music in the Schools* program. The Symphony's scope of services covers the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA), a 15-county area in two states. The Augusta Symphony includes four support organizations encompassing 650 volunteers whose energy and expertise contribute to its continuing success. For more information about the Augusta Symphony, visit www.augustasympphony.org or call 706.826.4705.

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