



st.petersburg NEWS

Marketing and Communications Phone: 727-893-7465 • Toll Free: 800-874-9007 • Fax: 727-892-5372 • Web site: www.stpete.org

CONTACT: Elizabeth Brincklow, Arts and International Relations Manager, 727-551-3250, elizabeth.brincklow@stpete.org **OR** Elizabeth Herendeen, Director, Marketing and Communications, 727-893-7465, elizabeth.herendeen@stpete.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ST. PETERSBURG RANKS NUMBER ONE ON LIST OF TOP U.S. 25 ARTS DESTINATIONS

ST. PETERSBURG, FL (May 17, 2010) – Members and friends of St. Petersburg's arts community have spoken, catapulting the city to the top spot on AmericanStyle Magazine's list of Top 25 Arts Destinations for mid-sized U.S. cities. This is a significant jump for St. Petersburg; since 2005, the city has consistently ranked near the bottom of the list among other Florida cities. This is the ninth straight year St. Petersburg has been recognized for its vibrant arts community and the first year it's finished in the top 10.

"This is great news for St. Petersburg – for the city and arts community, for tourism, for economic development – we couldn't have asked for a better result. Our entire city will benefit tremendously from the ranking. I want to thank everyone who believes in the importance of arts in our community for helping us reach number one," said Mayor Bill Foster.

The ranking becomes even more significant as St. Petersburg expands its arts offerings in the coming months, with the opening of the Dale Chihuly Collection and hot shop in July and the new home of the Salvador Dali museum, scheduled to open in January 2011. Six world-class museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Dali, already call St. Petersburg home. The city also boasts internationally-acclaimed music and theater at the Progress Energy Center for the Arts/Mahaffey Theater, as well as in more intimate venues, such as The Palladium Theater and American Stage. And St. Petersburg's downtown gallery district provides exhibition space for a diverse range of local and regional art exhibits. The recent dedication of the former Crislip Arcade, 645 Central Ave., into studio and gallery space for emerging artists further underscores the city's commitment to its arts community. City Council Chair and gallery owner Leslie Curran spearheaded the Crislip renovation.

Elizabeth Brincklow, the city's Arts and International Relations Manager, is pleased with the ranking for many reasons; it recognizes the work of many individuals and organizations such as the City's Arts Advisory Committee, Public Art Commission, the St. Pete Arts initiative, the Downtown Arts Association and the St. Petersburg Artist Resource Collaborative. "Years of effort by members of the arts community and others to raise awareness about the city's art scene have finally paid off. We are fortunate to have such a committed group of individuals and organizations in St. Petersburg who recognize the creative and economic impact of the arts and they have spoken," said Brincklow.

The recognition also reinforces the many programs managed by Brincklow. Among them, the Mahaffey Theater's notable Class Acts program provides arts education to students through in-school artist residency programs, master classes and field trips to curriculum-based stage productions; the Mahaffey Theater art gallery gives local and regional artists and art groups an opportunity to display their work in a high profile arts venue.

Results of the AmericanStyle survey will help further strengthen St. Petersburg's arts reputation locally as well as increase its national and international opportunities for tourism dollars. "A city with a strong arts community like St. Petersburg will continually work at attracting tourists to its museums, theaters, and galleries until it becomes the place everyone wants to visit," said Mayor Foster. "With the results of this year's survey, we find we're in the process of achieving that goal."

This is the 13th year for the AmericanStyle Magazine annual poll, which allows readers to vote on the cities they believe fit the criteria for a Top 25 Arts Destination based on a city's population. AmericanStyle Magazine is the nation's premier arts magazine for art, collectors, and cultural travelers, featuring information about American contemporary art and artists, galleries, travel and tourism.

-end-

No. 10-101 jes