



City of Clearwater

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Neighborhood to Create Murals to Stimulate Economic Turnaround

The East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association envisions a mural arts district that attracts visitors and stimulates commerce in Downtown Clearwater's East Gateway District. Three community murals, created in partnership with the Pinellas Opportunity Council's Talento 2010 program, will jump start the effort starting March 27, 2010.

CLEARWATER, Fla. – On March 27 and 28, 2010, a neighborhood will come together to paint a mural with a lofty goal in mind—to turn around downtown Clearwater's troubled East Gateway District.

The East Gateway Business & Neighbors Association is partnering with the Pinellas Opportunity Council and the City of Clearwater to produce the first of three murals in conjunction with the Pinellas Opportunity Council program, Talento 2010, A Celebration of Pinellas County's Hispanic Art and Culture.

In 2009, Hispanics and Latinos represented an estimated 61 percent of East Gateway's population. The neighborhood's median family income is 44 percent lower than that for the City of Clearwater as a whole. (Additional East Gateway demographics are available at www.myclearwater.com/eastgateway).

The first Talento 2010 mural will be completed during the March 27 to 28 event that Maria Emilia, Pinellas Opportunity Council Manager, calls a "weekend slam." Members of the neighborhood association and other community volunteers will don paint clothes and wield brushes and rollers in 2-hour shifts from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. each day at Tshirt Warehouse, 1498 Gulf to Bay Blvd.

Volunteer artists will not have to go it alone, though. The mural project will be under the direction of a local Hispanic artist, Jorge Vidal. Vidal has been coordinating with the neighborhood association over the past few months to design and plan the mural project and will be on-site for the painting process.

The mural theme is based on the historic gladiolus farms that occupied the area in the early 1900s. The neighbors association will dedicate the mural to the Constantine Farms and A&W Bulb Company, two former Clearwater gladiolus growers the association discovered during research for the mural. Coincidentally, ties still exist between a member of the neighborhood association and a member of the Constantine family in Sarasota, Fla.

— more —

Frank Hibbard, Mayor

George Cretokos, Councilmember
Paul Gibson, Councilmember

John Doran, Councilmember
Bill Jonson, Councilmember

The mural event concludes with a March 28 celebration at the Fraternal Order of Eagles, 1485 Gulf to Bay Blvd, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Eagles are extending their bi-weekly Delegates Breakfast to the general public (\$5 made to order breakfast, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.). The Eagles will serve hot dogs and burgers from noon. to 3 p.m. At 1 p.m., kids can tie-dye t-shirts (free while supplies last). Census 2010 representatives will staff an information booth. Everyone is invited to participate in the mural activities.

Two more Talento 2010 murals are scheduled for future weekend slams. On April 24 and 25, artist “Pila” Victoria Cadena will orchestrate a mural with officers of the Clearwater Police Department and kids from the Boys & Girls Club of the Suncoast. On May 1 and 2, artists Felipe Packard and Ricardo de la Vega team up with Clearwater’s Intercultural Advocacy Institute and Hispanic Outreach Center for a mural that coincides with a Cinco de Mayo festival.

The Pinellas Opportunity Council is covering the cost of the murals using federal stimulus grant funds in hopes that the outdoor art will attract visitors to the East Gateway District and generate customers for its diverse mix of small businesses, including several establishments known for their authentic Mexican cuisine. Once finished, the Talento 2010 murals and others in the city will be published in a mural guide.

About the Pinellas Opportunity Council, Inc.

Pinellas Opportunity Council, Inc. is the private non-profit Community Action Agency which has been serving the people of Pinellas County, Florida since 1968. The mission of the Pinellas Opportunity Council, Inc. is to alleviate poverty and promote self-sufficiency. The agency’s efforts are intended to help change people’s lives, embody the spirit of hope, improve communities, and make our area a better place to live. For more information, contact Maria Emilia, Manager Pinellas Opportunity Council, (727) 327-8690 ext. 14, e-mail memilia@poc-inc.org or visit www.poc-inc.org.

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