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Governor Crist Invites Floridians to Participate in Hispanic Heritage Month Student and Teacher Contests

~Hispanic Heritage Month begins September 15, contest deadlines are September 16 ~

www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today invited Florida students in kindergarten through 12th grades to participate in the seventh annual Florida Hispanic Heritage Month student contests. The Governor also encouraged students, parents, teachers and principals to nominate full-time educators in elementary, middle or high schools for the Hispanic Heritage Month Excellence in Education Award. The contests are part of a month-long series of events planned to commemorate Florida's Hispanic heritage. The theme for this year's celebration is *"Florida: Embracing Its Hispanic Roots While Looking to the Future."*

"Florida's Hispanic culture and history have enriched our communities, economy and way of life ever since Pensacola was first founded by Spanish explorers 450 years ago," Governor Crist said. "As we celebrate Florida's cultural diversity during Hispanic Heritage Month, I encourage Floridians and visitors alike to learn more about the importance and influence of the Hispanic community to our state."

Governor Crist encouraged students to visit www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com to read about Florida's Hispanic heritage, as well as learn about the art, essay and podcast contests.

Beginning on September 15, Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated nationwide, with Florida's contest deadlines occurring on September 16. Contest winners will be notified the week of October 5, 2009. Awards will be presented at the Governor's annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in Tallahassee in October.

All contest entries must be mailed to the Executive Office of the Governor, Attention: Hispanic Heritage Month Contests, 400 South Monroe Street, Suite LL-10, Tallahassee, Florida 32399. All contest entries must be by postmarked by September 16, 2009, and each student is limited to one entry per contest.

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About the Student Contests

Art Contest for Grades K-3 – The Hispanic Heritage Month art contest is open to all Florida students in grades K-3, and two winners will be selected. Winners will receive a \$250 check or gift card. Please visit www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com to download complete guidelines and entry forms.

Essay Contest for Grades 4-12 – The Hispanic Heritage Month essay contest is open to all 4th through 12th grade students in Florida. Three winners will be selected: one elementary (4-5) student, one middle (6-8) student, and one high school (9-12) student. Winners will receive a full four-year tuition scholarship to a Florida college or university of their choice, provided by the Florida Prepaid College Foundation.

Essays submitted by fourth and fifth graders should address the following topic: “Hispanic culture has been a part of Florida’s past and present, and will continue to influence the Florida of tomorrow. Choose a historic or present day Hispanic Floridian and describe the positive ways this person has impacted our state.”

High school and middle school essays should address the following topic: “Florida’s history is deeply rooted with Hispanic influences. Describe how the early Hispanic explorers impacted our state in the 1500s, and how that has influenced Florida’s culture today.”

Please visit www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com to download complete guidelines and entry forms.

Podcast Contest for Grades 4-12 – The Hispanic Heritage Month podcast contest is open to all 4th through 12th grade students in Florida and should address the same topics as the essay contest. Three winning podcasts will be selected: one elementary (4-5) entry, one middle (6-8) entry, and one high school (9-12) entry. Groups of up to three students are invited to submit digital videos in DVD format, no longer than three minutes. The teacher of the winning student groups will win a software package to be used in the classroom.

Please visit www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com to download complete guidelines and entry forms.

About the Teacher Contest

Governor Crist’s annual Excellence in Education Award Contest is open to all Hispanic, full time educators at an elementary, middle or high school in Florida. Three winners will be selected: one elementary (K-5) teacher, one middle school (6-8) teacher and one high school (9-12) teacher. Winners will receive a check for \$1,500.

Please visit www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com to download complete guidelines and entry forms.

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About Hispanic Heritage Month

Several Latin American countries celebrate the anniversaries of independence during Hispanic Heritage Month. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua celebrate independence on September 15. Mexico achieved independence on September 16, and Chile, on September 18. Hispanic Heritage Month has been celebrated in the United States since 1974 when President Gerald Ford issued a Presidential Proclamation extending Hispanic Heritage Week into a month-long celebration, from September 15 through October 15.

Additional information about Florida's Hispanic heritage, contests and other related events is available on the Web site www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com.

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