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Governor Crist Recognizes September 15 – October 15, 2009 as Hispanic Heritage Month in Florida

~ Reminds Students and Teachers to Participate in Hispanic Heritage Month Contests~

www.FloridaHispanicHeritage.com

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today issued a proclamation recognizing September 15 – October 15, 2009 as Hispanic Heritage Month for the citizens of the State of Florida. The proclamation urges citizens to celebrate the traditions, ancestry and unique experiences of those who trace their family background to Spain and Latin American countries.

“Florida’s economic and cultural strength continues to be shaped by our state’s Hispanic community, 450 years after the founding of Pensacola by Spanish conquistador Don Tristan de Luna,” said Governor Crist. “During Hispanic Heritage Month, I encourage Floridians throughout the state to celebrate and learn more about the importance and influence of the Hispanic community on Florida.”

On the eve of Florida’s Hispanic Heritage Month, Governor Charlie Crist today reminded Florida students, teachers and parents to participate in the seventh annual Florida Hispanic Heritage Month student contests. Announced by the Governor on September 1, the contests focus on the theme for this year’s celebration: *“Florida: Embracing Its Hispanic Roots While Looking to the Future.”*

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade are encouraged to participate in the seventh annual Florida Hispanic Heritage Month student contests. Additionally, students, parents, teachers and principals can nominate full-time educators in elementary, middle or high schools for the Hispanic Heritage Month Excellence in Education Award.

Contest deadlines are September 16. Winners will be notified the week of October 5, 2009. Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated nationwide beginning tomorrow, September 15, and ending on October 15.

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

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contest entries must be by postmarked by September 16, 2009, and each student is limited to one entry per contest.

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.

Hispanic Heritage Month contests are made possible thanks to the Volunteer Florida Foundation and contributions from sponsors such as Wal-Mart, Florida Prepaid College Foundation, Tropicana Products Inc., Prudential Financial, OHL USA Inc., Florida Coca-Cola Bottling Company and Tech4Learning Inc.

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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HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

WHEREAS, during National Hispanic Heritage Month, we join together to recognize the proud history and rich culture of Hispanic Americans; and

WHEREAS, this year's theme, "Florida: Embracing Its Hispanic Roots While Looking to the Future," showcases how Hispanic Americans have enriched the economic, social and cultural landscape of the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, Florida benefits from a vibrant Hispanic heritage that plays an integral role in the enriching of our society and the growing of our economy; and

WHEREAS, accomplishments made by Hispanic Americans serve as an inspiration to all who seek freedom, opportunity and a new beginning for themselves and their children; and

WHEREAS, Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates the traditions, ancestry, and unique experiences of those who trace their family background to Spain and Latin American countries; and

WHEREAS, 2009 marks the 450th anniversary of the founding of Pensacola by Spanish conquistador Tristán de Luna y Arellano; and

WHEREAS, Hispanic Americans contribute to our communities by serving the Sunshine State as entrepreneurs, public servants, scholars and artists; and

WHEREAS, countless Hispanic Americans work to protect the State of Florida and the nation through their involvement in the Armed Forces; and

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WHEREAS, all Floridians are encouraged to learn about the Sunshine State's rich cultural heritage and the important contributions made by Hispanic Americans to the success of our great state and country;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Charlie Crist, Governor of the State of Florida, do hereby extend greetings and best wishes to all observing September 15 – October 15, 2009 as *Hispanic Heritage Month*.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, the Capitol, this 14th day of September, in the year two thousand nine.

Charlie Crist
Governor