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SOUTHEAST TOURISM SOCIETY SELECTS FESTIVAL IN THE PARK AS A "TOP 20 EVENT IN THE SOUTHEAST" FOR SEPTEMBER 2012

Travel industry organization has saluted region's best events since 1985

CHARLOTTE (January 23, 2012) – The Southeast Tourism Society (STS) has named Charlotte's Festival in the Park one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast for September 2012. This year's Festival in the Park (www.FESTIVALinthePARK.org), held in Freedom Park here, will run September 21-23. This is the second year Festival in the Park has received this prestigious award.

"Every autumn since 1964, Festival in the Park has bestowed the finest in arts, crafts, entertainment, fun and food on Charlotteans and visitors from around the world," said Festival in the Park Executive Director Julie Whitney Austin, "and we are thrilled and honored by this prestigious recognition from STS."

"This fun-filled event is designed to promote and stimulate interest in the arts," Austin continued, "and it provides the opportunity to see, hear, and learn from over 150 artists and craftspeople who actively demonstrate and display their art."

In past years, Festival in the Park has also been chosen as one of *Sunshine Artist Magazine's* 200 Best Festivals.

During the Festival, nearly a thousand entertainers provide free, ongoing performances at the main band shell and many surrounding stages. Historically, Festival in the Park exceeds 85,000 visitors each year and is made possible by many groups and individuals. A sampling of the organizations that actively participate in bringing art and entertainment to the Festival are Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, Carolina Raptor Center, the Carolina Clowns, the Magicians' Stage, the Charlotte Folk Society, the Actor's Crib, and the Jazz Arts Initiative.

"The STS Top 20 Events list is an excellent guide for travelers in the Southeast," said Neville Bhada, vice president of communications and public relations for the Southeast Tourism Society. "Events selected represent the best activities the region offers. Being chosen is a great accolade that can draw extra attention to a festival or special event."

STS started its Top 20 Events program in 1985. Travel industry experts select 20 events per month, and STS publicizes the list throughout the United States. The complete list is published monthly on two web sites: www.southeasttourism.org and www.escapetotheseast.com. To be nominated for Top 20 Event consideration, an event must be in at least its third year and must have attendance of at least 1,000. Nomination forms and deadlines are available at www.southeasttourism.org or by calling 404-364-9847.

STS, founded in 1983 and headquartered in Atlanta, is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting tourism in 12 southeastern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

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