



illinois arts alliance

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CITY OF URBANA NAMED AN ILLINOIS ARTS FRIENDLY COMMUNITY
Illinois Arts Alliance and Illinois Municipal League to Recognize the City of Urbana
on September 26, 2008 at IML Conference

Chicago and Springfield – The Illinois Arts Alliance (IAA) and the Illinois Municipal League (IML) selected 17 communities to receive the 2008 **Illinois Arts Friendly Community Awards**. The **City of Urbana** captured one of 15 **Honorable Mentions**. The Village of Arlington Heights received the coveted Presidents' Choice Award, and the City of Effingham received the Presidents' Choice Award for a small community.

The **City of Urbana** will be recognized as an Arts Friendly Community at the Illinois Municipal League's annual conference at the Chicago Hilton on **Friday, September 26, 2008** by IML President Gerald Bennet, Mayor of Palos Hills; Alderman Rich Walker of the City of Edwardsville; and Mayor Al Larson of the Village of Schaumburg.

The **Gallery District Incentive Program** is one reason for the City of Urbana's Arts Friendly Designation. The program provides rent subsidies to qualified art gallery businesses locating within a designated area of downtown Urbana. This program provides a 12-month subsidy of up to 50% of the monthly rent amount, up to a maximum of \$500 per month. Through this program, qualified art gallery businesses may also request a \$1,000 start-up grant to be used for costs associated with relocation, advertising, and tenant improvements. The purpose of this program is to promote and be a catalyst for private investment within an area that has seen a trend of disinvestment. To date, four businesses have been recipients of the Gallery District Incentive Program.

The 14 other communities receiving Honorable Mentions are Aurora, Bartlett, Belvidere, Carol Stream, Danville, Elmwood Park, Hickory Hills, Highland Park, Hoffman Estates, Lombard, Orland Park, Palatine, Princeton, Tinley Park, and Waukegan.

"As one of the state's leading industries, the arts enhance our quality of life, fuel creativity and innovation, and contribute to an overall culture of excellence in our neighborhoods and schools," said **Ra Joy, executive director of the Illinois Arts Alliance**. "It's a great honor to celebrate local communities that recognize the arts and creativity as central and indispensable to their residents. I hope the strong and consistent support for the arts demonstrated by our 2008 award winners will serve as an inspiration to other communities in Illinois."

"By investing in the arts, we can inspire and strengthen our communities," said **Al Larson, Village President of Schaumburg**. "Each of these communities provides a model for how mayors can collaborate with arts organizations and artists to improve the quality of life of all residents." Schaumburg received the inaugural Presidents' Award in 2003.

The **Illinois Arts Friendly Community Awards** serve to recognize municipalities that support the arts and to celebrate municipal leaders who use the arts to build healthy communities. Two Presidents' Awards are presented annually – one to a small community with a population less than 20,000 and one to a larger community. Previous recipients of the Presidents' Awards are Schaumburg, Rockford, Rock Island, Carbondale, and Evanston (large community), and Fairfield, Palos Park, Prophetstown, Marshall, and Lincolnwood (small community).

All nominations are judged on four criteria: Is the municipality's commitment to the arts ongoing; Do the municipality's arts activities meet a clearly defined community needs, and are the results tangible; Is broad and diverse support for the municipality's arts activities present in the community; Is the municipality creative and innovative in integrating the arts with its overall municipal strategies?

More information on the Arts Friendly Community Awards – including information on past winners – is available online at www.artsalliance.org/artsfriendly.

*The **Illinois Arts Alliance (IAA)** is the statewide arts advocacy and service organization promoting the value of the arts to all residents of Illinois. Through research, capacity building, and communication, IAA advances widespread support of all the arts, enhances the health of the arts and cultural sector, and fosters a climate in which the broadest spectrum of artistic expression can flourish. For more information about IAA, visit www.artsalliance.org.*

*The **Illinois Municipal League** is a statewide association representing over 1090 Illinois cities and villages. The League serves as the formal voice for Illinois municipalities in matters of common interest and on issues before the General Assembly, Congress, and state and federal agencies.*

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