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FORMER GOVERNOR RILEY TO BE RECOGNIZED FOR HIS DEDICATION TO THE ARTS

COLUMBIA, S.C. –-The S.C. Arts Foundation will present former S.C. Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley with the McNair Award for his leadership and dedication to the arts and arts education in S.C. The presentation takes place at the S.C. Arts Gala, 7 p.m. on May 6 at the Columbia Museum of Art.

"Throughout his career, Dick Riley has worked tirelessly to improve lives and opportunities for citizens and students in our state and nation. He has been a champion of the arts as a means of enhancing our quality of life, economic development and the education of our children," says Patrick R. VanHuss, S.C. Arts Foundation president. "The members of the S.C. Arts Foundation join me in honoring Governor Riley for his tremendous efforts in supporting the arts and improving education for all students."

As a member of the S.C. General Assembly, Riley was instrumental in crafting legislation that established requirements for arts instruction during the school day. As Governor of South Carolina (1979-87), Riley initiated the Education Improvement Act to enact a quality program of public instruction for current and future generations. Among other initiatives, the EIA directed funding to support Gifted and Talented programs in the arts for public schools.

In 1980, he created the Governor's Task Force on the Arts, charged with laying "the foundation for building an infrastructure for the arts in South Carolina." This led to the creation of the Joint Legislative Committee on Cultural Affairs, which championed the growth of the state's arts sector and comprehensive reform in arts education through the Arts in Basic Curriculum program. He was instrumental in establishing the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities. In 1980, he added to the prestige of the S.C. Arts Commission's Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award, giving it the official designation as the Governor's Award for the Arts.

During his tenure as U.S. Secretary of Education (1993-2001), Riley helped launch initiatives to raise academic standards; improve instruction for the poor and disadvantaged; increase parental involvement in education; expand grants and loans to help more students attend college; and prepare young people in America for the world of work. The Goals 2000 national education goals established during his administration were the first to include the arts as core curriculum subjects.

Established in 2007, the McNair Award is named for the late Governor Robert E. McNair, who signed legislation to create the Arts Commission in 1967 to "ensure that the arts continue to grow and play an ever more significant part in the welfare and educational experiences of our citizens."

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The S.C. Arts Gala on May 6 will also recognize the 2010 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Awards for the Arts recipients, including Lifetime Achievement Award recipients Pat Conroy and Jonathan Green. The celebration includes food, entertainment and a silent auction of original works of art by South Carolina artists. To reserve tickets to the South Carolina Arts Gala, visit www.SouthCarolinaArts.com or call (803) 734-8696. The event is hosted by the S.C. Arts Foundation and sponsored by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina. Tickets are $50 per person.

About the S.C. Arts Foundation

Established in 1972, the S.C. Arts Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to recognizing, encouraging and supporting the art and artists of South Carolina. Throughout its history, the SCAF has pursued creative ways to help the business community and private citizens contribute to a thriving arts community across the state. The organization is led by a diverse board of directors comprised of statewide business and civic leaders, artists, educators and others interested in supporting the rich variety of artistic expression found in the Palmetto State. For more information, visit www.SouthCarolinaArts.com/Foundation or call (803) 734-8696.

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