

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gov. Riley recognizes Birmingham Children's Theatre for role in national award-winning campaign

MONTGOMERY - Birmingham Children's Theatre was recognized by Governor Bob Riley for its partnership with the Alabama Tourism Department in the award-winning Year of Alabama Arts campaign.

The Birmingham Children's Theatre was presented with a special certificate by the governor during an awards reception at the state capitol.

Gov. Riley announced that the Alabama Tourism Department received the Travel Industries Association's highest honor for its Year of Alabama Arts campaign, Governor Bob Riley announced Wednesday, as well as two other national competitions.

The TIA's Discover America Marketing Award was presented at its "Odyssey" awards banquet in Portland, Ore., on Oct. 28 and featured in the November issue of National Geographic Traveler.

The 2007 promotion also won the National Council of State Tourism Directors' "Mercury" award for best state promotion and Travel Weekly's "Magellan" award for promotion of culture and the arts in the U.S. and Canada.

"To win on top award is outstanding, but to win the best in three separate competitions must be unprecedented," Gov. Riley told several hundred tourism and arts representatives at a reception at the State Capitol.

The purpose of the 15-month campaign was "to put a huge spotlight on the arts, everything from architecture to dance and in between," state tourism director Lee Sentell said. "We had involvement from more than 60 communities which shows how important the arts are all over the state."

Staff member Brian Jones created a 56-page brochure that promoted exhibitions, festivals and landmarks in 64 towns and cities. Four television commercials featuring the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, arts festivals and Gee's Bend quilts were broadcast on Alabama Public Television, the Bravo network and Raycom Media stations, Sentell said.

A website created by Luckie & Company, a Birmingham ad agency, allowed individual artist to post profiles of themselves and works for sale, he added.

Sentell said the Alabama Folk Art Exhibition sponsored with the Birmingham Museum of Art displayed works by some of the state's best-known "outsider" artists, including Lonnie Holley, Mose Tollier, Jimmie Lee Sudduth and Jerry Brown.

“We were grateful that local newspapers in Alabama supported the arts campaign by focusing on hometown organizations, facilities and artists,” the tourism director said. Many local groups included the campaign’s colorful quilt logo developed in association with the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, Las Vegas and Florida previously won the TIA “Discover America” award that is open to private companies and public agencies, officials said.

This was the second time in three years that Alabama received the “Mercury” award for best statewide promotion, winning earlier for the Year of Alabama Food. It was presented in Florida last month, Sentell said, adding that the agency also received the Southeast Tourism Society’s top organization award for the arts promotion, the third time in four years to win.

Gov. Riley previously announced that 2009 will be celebrated as the Year of Alabama History and 2010 will be the Year of Small Towns and Downtowns.

THE YEAR OF ALABAMA ARTS

The Alabama Tourism Department is honored to have received the industry’s top awards for its Year of Alabama Arts campaign:

- **Discover America Odyssey Award** for best domestic marketing promotion of any tourism organization public or private from the Travel Industry Association.
- **Mercury Award** for best special promotion by a state tourism department from the National Council of State Tourism Directors.
- **Gold Magellan Award** for the best overall cultural arts promotion in the United States and Canada from *Travel Weekly* magazine.
- **Shinning Example Award** for State Organization of the Year from the Southeast Tourism Society.
- **Lantern Award** for the best long-term public relations program from the Southern Public Relations Federation.