

HERNANDO COUNTY
Office of Tourist Development

30305 Cortez Blvd. ~ Brooksville, FL. 34602
352-754-4405

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 26, 2008 – BROOKSVILLE, FL.

TOURISM BUREAU AWARDS GRANTS TO LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Susan Rupe, Director of the Hernando County Tourism Bureau, and Bobbi Mills, Chairperson of the Hernando County Tourist Development Council (HCTDC), are pleased to announce the annual funding awards to local community organizations.

Each year, the HCTDC sets aside a portion of its annual budget in a grant program for local groups and organizations coordinating events with a demonstrated history of visitor impact or a significant potential to draw visitors to the area. The funds are designated for event promotion and marketing while showing Hernando County as a visitor destination with emphasis on leisure activities, amateur sporting events, meetings and conventions, group travel, motion picture and television productions. Grant applications must be submitted in writing, and each group is invited to make a personal presentation to the HCTDC. The number and extent of the grants are dependant upon the availability of earmarked funds and specific allocations.

At the September 24, 2008 meeting, the HCTDC awarded Special Funding Grants for the 2008-2009 year, totaling \$28,817.00 to the following:

The Brooksville Mural Society for The Mural Project: \$1,500.00
The Brooksville Business Alliance for the I-75 Billboard Project: \$2,317.00
The Hernando County Fine Arts Council for the Bandshell Bash Project: \$2,000.00
The Friends of the Children, Inc. for the Blazin' Butts n' Briskets Barbeque Competition: \$2,000.00
The Hernando County Fine Arts Council for A Taste of Jazz: \$2,500.00
The Spring Hill Art League for the Annual Fall Harvest of Art show: \$1,000.00
The Friends of Chinsegut Hill for A Christmas Evening at Chinsegut Hill: \$2,000.00
The Hernando Historical Museum for The Brooksville Raid Re-Enactment: \$3,500.00
The Weeki Wachee Swamp Festival, Inc. for the Annual Weeki Wachee Swamp Fest: \$2,000.00
The Hernando County Humane Society for the 5th Annual Pet Expo: \$2,500.00
The Hernando County Fine Arts Council for the Art, Craft and Music in the Park: \$2,500.00
The Brooksville Ministerial Association for the Christian Music Fest: \$5,000.00

Tourism is an essential element of the Hernando County economy, and the support of local events and organizations is vital to the tourism factor. The local tourism industry employs more than 4,800 residents in leisure and hospitality industry and services, generating an overall payroll of \$60-million per year. The accommodations industry alone employs 285 local residents, generating a payroll of \$3.7 million. 14% of the sales tax collected in Hernando County is tourism or recreation related. Visitors to Hernando County totaled over 559,000 last year.

The HCTDC was created pursuant to the State of Florida Local Option Tourist Development Act and Hernando County Ordinance. The HCTDC budget is administered through funds collected from a local tourist development tax on occupied accommodations such as hotels, motels, campgrounds, condo and home rentals of 6 months or less

For more tourism information and to view a calendar of events, please use www.naturallyhernando.org or call 352-754-4405.