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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bradenton and Sarasota Announce Florida's Largest Joint Arts & Culture Event
Festival sARTEé Welcomes Southwest Florida Artists to Participate

BRADENTON/SARASOTA, Fla. (March 10, 2010) – Manatee and Sarasota Counties on Florida's southwest Gulf coast have long been known as cultural destinations loaded with outstanding performing, visual and artistic treasures. In October 2010, the two destinations will make history when they debut **Festival sARTEé** (sar-tay), a first-time festival showcasing the region's arts and cultural assets, concurrently with the **2nd Annual Ringling International Arts Festival (RIAF)**. Festival sARTEé welcomes local and regional artists to participate by submitting existing and creating new events to highlight during the event.

"We're very proud to be partnering with Sarasota County on this groundbreaking event," said Larry White, executive director, the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Festival sARTEé will expand the energy and excitement of RIAF by allowing visitors to experience all the wonderful arts and culture we offer in Manatee and Sarasota Counties."

A monumental collaborative effort between the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau, Sarasota County Arts Council, Arts Council of Manatee County and Realize Bradenton, Festival sARTEé combines the expertise of each organization, including industry outreach and cultural tourism marketing. To generate early interest and create a sense of ownership for the event, initial brainstorming made use of social media to invite visitors to suggest names for the festival. A New York resident and Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau Facebook fan suggested the name sARTEé, which combines "art" with the two counties – Sarasota and Manatee.

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“Festival sARTEé is truly a grassroots marketing effort by both destinations, beginning with our social networks, expanding into the region’s arts communities and ultimately reaching our potential visitors,” said Virginia Haley, president, the Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau. “In Sarasota County, we’re pleased to offer this festival as another appealing option for cultural tourism visitors drawn to our destination during RIAF.”

Planned for October 8-24, Festival sARTEé will feature a unique mix of visual arts, ballet, food art, poetry, circus art and more, along with events before, during and after the larger RIAF hosted and managed by The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. Festival sARTEé organizers also plan to work with local hotels and participating attractions to offer dynamic travel packages that will combine accommodations and event tickets. In addition, a multi-county cultural map is envisioned to help visitors explore the destination and each individual event.

To submit an existing or new event for consideration as part of Festival sARTEé, please visit www.sartee.com and enter the information into the online calendar. All events must be open to the public and can be a single day event or multi-day experience.

About Festival sARTEé

The Festival sARTEé expands the energy and excitement of the Ringling International Arts Festival (RIAF), in Sarasota-Manatee Counties, October 13-17, 2010. For two weeks surrounding the RIAF, Festival sARTEé, being held October 8-24, showcases the region’s world-class arts and culture ranging from theatre, dance, music, visual art, live music, circus arts and more in a variety of venues throughout Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Festival sARTEé derives its name from both Sarasota and Manatee Counties, joined by the common element of art. The counties are situated along Florida’s west coast. The first Festival sARTEé is organized through a partnership between the Arts Council of Manatee County, Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Realize Bradenton, Inc., Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Sarasota County Arts Council.

- Festival sARTEé -