

## **Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CONTACT:**

Joanie Thomson  
Executive Director,  
541 387 8877, x111  
[director@columbiaarts.org](mailto:director@columbiaarts.org)

Lloyd DeKay  
President, White Salmon Arts Council  
[info@whitesalmonarts.org](mailto:info@whitesalmonarts.org)  
509-637-2737

### **Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance Announced**

*- Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations form coalition to promote the Columbia Gorge as an Arts and Culture regional destination –*

**The Dalles, OR and White Salmon, WA (October 13, 2010)** – A group of arts, culture and heritage organizations and individuals announced the formation of the Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance (CGA&CA) to promote the Columbia Gorge as a regional destination for arts and culture.

“The Columbia Gorge is home to an array of fantastic museums, art centers, heritage sites and artists,” said Joanie Thomson, executive director of the Columbia Center for the Arts. “We want to be known – like Santa Fe, New Mexico, Paducah, Kentucky or Nelson, New Zealand – as an arts and culture region. A great place to live for artists and culture mavens, and a great place to visit.”

Said Lloyd DeKay, president of the White Salmon Arts Council: “People think of the Gorge as a recreational destination. We want them to also see it as a cultural destination — a magnet of history and creativity that will draw local residents and visitors and benefit our economy.”

The CGA&CA was established following a meeting of 30 organizations and individuals that came together August 17, 2010 at Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, WA, to discuss the challenges and opportunities for arts and culture in the Columbia Gorge, facilitated by Lee Weinstein of LWA PR in The Dalles.

Among the attendees were Thomson and DeKay, Kris Tucker, executive director of the Washington Arts Commission; Chris D’Arcy, director of the Oregon Arts Commission and Oregon Cultural Trust; Carmen Toll, executive director of The Dalles Art Center; Carolyn Purcell, executive director of the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center; John Maher, Pat Bozanich and Mary Rollins with Gorge Artists Open Studios; Harriet Langfeldt, president of The Dalles Art Association; Connie Nice, museum Coordinator for The History Museum in Hood River; Jessica Metta with the Mid Columbia Economic Development District; Roberta Lavadour, Executive Director of the Pendleton Center for the Arts; Mike Cannon with Klickitat County Economic Development, and representatives from the Goldendale Art Gallery, Vancouver USA Regional Tourism Office, Travel Portland, Gorge area Chamber of Commerce organizations and others.

The alliance will focus on establishing the Columbia Gorge as an arts and culture destination through cooperative planning and marketing while emphasizing and enhancing the economic benefits to the region. It seeks to develop a sustainable reputation for the culture and arts of the region, and for organizations and individuals to be recognized as being economically vital to the region. It also seeks to make arts and culture attractive, accessible and engaging to all residents and guests of the Gorge.

Among the Alliance’s first activities will be to apply for capacity-building grants to be used to brand Gorge arts and culture assets and promote the region. The Alliance will focus on a major advertising campaign to promote Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Month in May 2011, promote major arts and culture activities during shoulder seasons. Many key events take place in the Gorge in May, including the annual Gorge Artists Open Studios; Maryhill Museum of Art’s Outdoor Sculpture Exhibit (May 9) and Founder’s Day (May 21); Columbia Center for

the Arts in Hood River presents "All My Sons" by Arthur Miller (May 12-21), their Columbia Art Gallery features Annimal Essence (May 6-29), Portrait Sessions Workshop every Friday 9am-noon, and a film series (May 25); a new art show at the Peggy Ohlson Studio in White Salmon; the Gorge Heritage Museum's annual plant sale (May 8); White Salmon's Spring Festival; the White Salmon Open Studio Tours; and many more events.

"We think we have a great opportunity to partner with hoteliers, Chambers and other businesses during the off-season to draw visitors to the area to make a weekend out of visiting the Columbia Gorge arts and culture region," said Jessica Metta of the Mid Columbia Economic Development District. "Arts and culture are key drivers of economic activity in our area," added Mike Cannon of the Klickitat County Economic Development Department.

The CGACA also plans to establish a website that any alliance participant can use to promote arts and culture activities in the Columbia Gorge. A Facebook page was launched at [www.facebook.com/Columbia-Gorge-Arts-Culture-Alliance](http://www.facebook.com/Columbia-Gorge-Arts-Culture-Alliance). The alliance also aims to stimulate collaboration in event planning and co-op marketing.

Metta said it has already applied for grants with both the Oregon and Washington Arts Commissions to develop a logo, website, rack card, co-operative print ads and project manager time to promote the May 2011 Gorge Arts and Culture Month. Several local arts and culture organizations and individuals have offered funding to match the grants, including Columbia Arts, Maryhill Museum, White Salmon Arts Council, Marsha Holliston, LWA PR, Gorge Artists Open Studio and the Discovery Center.

"We've had amazing cooperation and energy come out of our meetings so far," added DeKay. "We agree on what needs doing and we now want to get some key successes under our belt and build momentum."

The next meeting of the CGA&CA is October 21, 2010 at the Columbia Center for the Arts, 215 Cascade Ave in Hood River. Any person or organization interested or working in arts or culture is invited to attend. The meeting is open to the public.

*Founding members of the CGA&CA at Marhill Museum in August 2010*

**About the Columbia Gorge Arts & Culture Alliance (CGA&CA):** Formed in 2010 by Columbia Gorge culture and arts organizations, historians, artists and culture mavens, the GA&CA promotes the Columbia Gorge as an arts and culture region and destination: A magnet that will draw local residents and visitors and benefit our economy. The CGACA focuses on the economic benefit of making the Columbia Gorge recognizable as an arts and culture region. Its vision is to make the Columbia Gorge internationally recognized as a premier arts and culture region and to ensure that arts and culture play an active and sustained part in life in the Gorge, keeping them attractive, involving and accessible.

For more information visit [facebook.com/columbiagorgeartsandculturealliance](http://facebook.com/columbiagorgeartsandculturealliance) or email [ColumbiaGorgeArtsAndCulture@gmail.com](mailto:ColumbiaGorgeArtsAndCulture@gmail.com). A website will launch soon at [columbiagorgeartsandculture.com](http://columbiagorgeartsandculture.com).