

## The City of Gainesville Presents A Beaux-Arts Ball “Roaring 20s” Costume Gala on February 13 as Part of the Thomas Center for the Arts 100th Anniversary Celebration

The City of Gainesville Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs is hosting the **2nd Annual Beaux-Arts Ball** at the Thomas Center on **Saturday, Feb. 13, 2010** from 8 to 11 p.m. The Beaux-Arts Ball is a costume gala that, in keeping with the Center’s 1920s history, is themed “**The Roaring Twenties.**” Live 1920s era jazz music by the six-piece band **23 Skiddoo** has been put together by popular area musician Bill Hutchinson just for the occasion. There will be costumed professional dancers from **Mostly Swing Gainesville** demonstrating and teaching the popular dances of the times such as the Black Bottom, Lindy Hop and Charleston, along with an assortment of flappers and gangsters. There will be heavy hors d’oeuvres and BYOB (or flask!) set-ups. (Let’s hope the Untouchables don’t raid us due to prohibition!) General admission tickets are \$85. Tickets reserved before February 5 are discounted to \$75. Space is limited, so advance reservations are recommended. The Beaux-Arts Ball is part of the Valentine’s Day’s weekend and will offer couples a perfect romantic evening of dancing and dining in the beautiful Thomas Center Spanish Court. All proceeds from the Beaux-Arts Ball will benefit the new Thomas Center Theatre for Young Audiences programming.



This year’s ball is being presented as a part of the Thomas Center for the Arts’ 100th Anniversary Celebration. The festivities, jointly sponsored by the City of Gainesville and The Thomas Center Associates will begin on Friday Feb. 12 in the evening with a reception at the Thomas Center where visitors can learn about the building’s history by taking a tour of the facility with a costumed guide, catch a sampling of the 1920s’ era dancers that will be performing at the Beaux-Arts Ball and attend a gallery reception for “HAIRPOLITIC: Pomade in America,” an exhibition by artist Kenya (Robinson). Friday evening’s festivities will run from 5 to 8 p.m. and are free and open to the public.

Cultural Affairs will be inaugurating the Theatre for Young Audiences in the spring of 2010. The program will take place in the Grace and Sidney Knight Garden Theatre. Located in the city's beautiful Thomas Center gardens, this lovely amphitheatre will soon be filled anew with the smiles and laughter of our area youth and their families. Performances will be held on Saturday mornings and early Thursday evenings. Plays will be chosen for their suitability and entertainment appeal for young audiences as well as their families. Each production will run for several weeks.

David Ballard, an events coordinator for the City of Gainesville, is the Theatre for Young Audiences artistic director. Among his credits, Ballard has served as the puppet master for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and has created and performed in programs for young audiences at the Smithsonian Institution, the National Park Service, Walt Disney Productions and the Virginia Museum. David was the artistic director of the Cracker-Box Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University and also taught and performed for many years as an artist in the schools on many federal and state funded programs. In addition, he has performed at and directed programs for young audiences at fairs and festivals for more than 30 years, including the International Children's Festival at Wolf Trap Farm Park; the International American Bicentennial Festival at Yorktown, VA; the Florida State Fair and at Renaissance; medieval and city festivals nationwide. Ballard will personally direct one production each year, while guest directors from the area will direct the others. Each director will choose the play they will present and, while some may be age specific from pre-school through teens, Ballard says the primary goal of the theatre's programming is to present shows suitable for all ages to enjoy together. "I have performed in theatres and festivals all over the world with a mix of children and adults in my audiences," he says. "I love having the whole family enjoy sharing live theatre. People often tell me that it helps to bring their families closer together."

The City of Gainesville invites the public to dress up in 1920s costume or formal attire and join them for a nostalgic trip to the era of jazz, gangsters, flappers, swing dance and speakeasies. To make a reservation for the Beaux-Arts Ball or to get more information, please call 352-393-8746 or you could even stop by the Thomas Center and pay in cold hard cash!

The Cultural Affairs Division is the designated local arts agency for Gainesville and Alachua County. Its mission is to promote cultural activity and encourage community based cultural resources.

For more information on the Thomas Center Theatre for Young Audiences, the Beaux-Arts Ball or to schedule an interview, please contact David Ballard at 352-393-8746. For more information about Friday night's 100th anniversary reception please contact Erica Chatman at 352-393-8539.