

Public/Private Partnership Extends the Oklahoma Collage Project: *Oklahoma Today* Magazine, Hideaway Pizza, and the Oklahoma History Center

Three separate entities which have worked independently over the past eight years to present the Oklahoma Centennial Collage Project are happy to announce a unique public and private partnership to continue the successful project beyond the year 2007. The group's goal is to create a visual history from the people's perspective of what it means to be an Oklahoman.

The Oklahoma History Center and *Oklahoma Today* magazine, both of which document life in Oklahoma with words and images, have agreed to partner with Hideaway Pizza. The theme for the 2008 competition is **Field, Forest & Stream: Oklahomans and the Outdoors**. The competition is open to any individual, school, business, or organization in the state and annually awards \$10,000 in prize money.

With the joint partnership, the new themes are designed to coincide with annual exhibits at the Oklahoma History Center, beginning in 2008. Winning collages will be presented alongside the annual exhibit, and the OHC will host judging, award ceremonies, and initial exhibits of all entries. The deadline for 2008 entries is March 1, 2008.

Hideaway Pizza has been the primary sponsor of the statewide art competition for the previous eight years. The privately owned Oklahoma pizza chain, which celebrates its fiftieth anniversary throughout 2007, worked with the Oklahoma Historical Society and *Oklahoma Today* staff on judging, award ceremonies, and exhibits during the tenure of the project. Currently, a retrospective of some of the top winners from the past eight years is on exhibit in the Inasmuch Gallery at OHC. The exhibit runs through June 30, 2007.

"We've received more than six hundred entries over the years, from nearly every county in the state," says Janie Harris, Hideaway Pizza's marketing director. "Many school teachers use the project as a way to engage their students in learning as well as earn funds for their classrooms. We love exhibiting these around the state and in our restaurants. People are quite taken with them."

PARTNERSHIP COMMENCES

With the final award ceremony in April 2007, *Oklahoma Today* publisher Joan Henderson, OHS executive director Bob Blackburn, and Harris of Hideaway Pizza lamented the end of the highly successful project celebrating Oklahoma's uniqueness and history. The three agreed to continue the project with each agency or company providing sponsorship in different areas.

Henderson, a past judge for the Oklahoma Collage Project, explained their reason for partnering with the project. "*Oklahoma Today* has been around as long as the Hideaway," she says. "Our images have been used on the collage walls of the original Hideaway in Stillwater. We have provided back issues to people entering this project since inception. Our

involvement just makes sense. We are the people's magazine, the history center is the people's museum, and this project is the people's project."

Oklahoma Today, the state's official magazine, is a division of the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department.

Blackburn also viewed the partnership as a natural fit. "First, this project does for the state of Oklahoma what the history center does for the state: It creates a sense of community and reflects something about who we are as a state and a people. Second, the OHC is a resource for the people, with more than 7,000 photographs and 2,000 artifacts on exhibit reflecting the history of Oklahoma. We are a deep well of resources for the people working on this project each year."

Blackburn's support for the project began with the original Hideaway contest celebrating the millennium, when 120 four-by-six-foot collages decorated the lawn of the Oklahoma Historical Society building on Lincoln Boulevard and State Capitol Park. When the Oklahoma Centennial Commission approached the Hideaway about continuing the project through 2007, Blackburn agreed to endorse the project, providing judges each year.

Henderson and Louisa McCune-Elmore, editor in chief of *Oklahoma Today*, alternately served as judges and saw the tremendous value in the work created by students and individuals from all corners of the state.

"We didn't want this to end," Henderson says. "To see kids really stop and think about the state with this project enhances the way they perceive where they live. It's a pride builder. *Oklahoma Today* touches every county and community in Oklahoma, and this project has, too."

For more details, visit www.collage2000.com, www.OklahomaToday.com or www.okhistory.org.