

WATERFRONT PARKS CENTENNIAL 1910 - 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Sydni Ann Shollenberger, APR, 727-550-0096; Peter Belmont, 727-463-4612

Mayor Baker to Serve as Honorary Chair for Waterfront Parks Centennial

November 7, 2009 ~ St. Petersburg, Fla.

The Honorable Rick Baker, Mayor of the City of St. Petersburg, will serve as Honorary Chair of the St. Petersburg Waterfront Parks Centennial Celebration, marking the founding of the city's downtown waterfront parks in 1909 and 1910.

Baker was introduced as honorary chair during ceremonies in October at St. Petersburg City Hall at which the City proclaimed 2010 as a year of celebration of the founding of the downtown waterfront parks. Peter Belmont, chair of the Waterfront Parks Centennial Celebration Steering Committee, made the announcement.

"This 100-year anniversary of the founding and dedication of the first waterfront parkland is another great opportunity for us to celebrate and honor our beautiful city," Baker said. "We can focus attention on our magnificent waterfront parks and rededicate ourselves to ensuring that this asset remains a center for celebration and recreation for generations of residents and visitors to come."

First elected mayor in 2001, Baker was re-elected for a second term in 2005 and will leave office when his term expires in January 2010. Born in Chicago, Mayor Baker has been a long-time resident of St. Petersburg. His interest in the city's beginnings and development as a world-class residential city and tourist destination resulted in his publishing *Mangroves to Major Leagues*, a book on the history of St. Petersburg from 23,000 B.C. to 2000 A.D.

Visionary leaders of 1909 bought the original waterfront land in December 1909, championed the idea of dedicating it as public parkland, and succeeded in that goal in December 1910. These men and women were instrumental in shaping the future character and appearance of St. Petersburg as a destination resort city with focus on outdoor recreation and the cultural arts. By reversing the development of the waterfront in the early 1900's as a marine industrial center and port, the city and its citizens began the tradition of treasuring the waterfront as a place of open Bay vistas, beaches, and greenery for family picnics and civic celebrations.

The St. Petersburg downtown waterfront parks, with additional land accumulated over the past 100 years, now stretch from North Shore Park, 901 North Shore Drive North, to Albert Whitted Park, bordering the airport at 107 8th Avenue Southeast.

The year-long series of events and observances marking the 2010 Centennial year will begin on Friday, November 27, with *Holiday Movies in the Park*, a series of films sponsored by the City of St. Petersburg on Friday and Saturday nights through Saturday, December 19, in North Straub Park, 400



Rick Baker, who completes his second term as St. Petersburg mayor in January 2010, is Honorary Chair for the Waterfront Centennial.

Bayshore Drive, in downtown St. Petersburg.

At St. Petersburg's First Night New Year's Eve celebration on Thursday, December 31, 2009, an annual event that fills the waterfront parks and other downtown venues with activities, performances, art, and music, the Centennial Steering Committee plans a special family activity, a treasure hunt called *Discover History in the Parks*.

At least five special events are planned for 2010:

- ***Picture the Parks***, beginning on January 30 with a photography workshop and including a contest for best pictures taken in the waterfront parks
- ***May Movies in the Park***, a series of four movies in North Straub Park on successive Thursday nights
- ***Perspectives on the Parks***, a series of three separate events to be scheduled in spring and fall 2010, covering the history of the parks, the social issues during the era of racial segregation in the parks, and the future of the waterfront parks
- ***Party in the Parks***, Saturday, November 6, 2010, a whole day of fun and family-friendly activities throughout the downtown waterfront parks. Coast Guard tours, Rays Street Team, free movie and much more

Saint Petersburg Preservation (SPP), an historic preservation advocacy group founded in 1977 as a 501(c) (3) charitable organization, originated the idea of the St. Petersburg Waterfront Centennial Celebration and provided initial funding for start-up. The Centennial Celebration all-volunteer Steering Committee is a committee of SPP.

The poster for the Waterfront Parks Centennial is taken from a painting created especially in honor of the Centennial Celebration by St. Petersburg artist Carrie Jadus. Copies will be for sale at events throughout the Centennial year.

As an all-volunteer nonprofit endeavor, the Centennial Celebration seeks tax deductible contributions through the Waterfront Parks Centennial Celebration website, www.stpeteparks100.org, or by sending checks, made payable to SPP Centennial Celebration Fund, to 200 Second Avenue South, #100, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701.

- end -