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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Mexican Heritage Corporation Partners with Regional Non-Profits and Santa Clara County to Provide Meals and Arts Programs to Kids**

**San José, CA - May 25, 2010** - The Mexican Heritage Corporation (MHC), the non-profit producer of the annual San José Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival, today announced the organization's selection by Santa Clara County to receive a grant for a new summer program providing nutritious meals and music and dance instruction at three summer camps in San José this year. The grant is funded through the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Contingency Funds and administered by the YMCA of Silicon Valley. The grant contract amount is in excess of \$800,000.

The three summer camps will each last eight weeks and provide free nutritious meals to hundreds of children from qualified low-income families in San José. MHC will partner with the San José State University (SJSU) School of Music and Dance, National Hispanic University, the City of San José Parks and Recreation, Listen for Life Foundation, and CreaTV to provide the all-day summer music and dance camps, completely free of charge from June 21 to August 13. YMCA of Silicon Valley will provide traditional summer day camp activities and educational enrichment for the children. Other partners in the consortium include the County of Santa Clara Office of Social Services, Boys and Girls Clubs of Silicon Valley, First Five of Santa Clara County and Second Harvest Food Bank.

“Access to healthy nutrition and music education has shown to increase the academic achievement of children from low income environments, said Linda Ronstadt, Artistic Director of MHC and the Mariachi Festival. “It is wonderful that this highly successful program will now be available to families in San José.”

Summer camp participants aged 6-17, will receive breakfast, lunch and two snacks each day, participate in comprehensive music and dance instruction and attend music performances at the SJSU School of Music and Dance, National Hispanic University campus and the City of San José's Mayfair Community Center. The program design is based upon Venezuela's highly successful 35-year-old model of free nutrition and music instruction for underprivileged children

known as El Sistema, founded by Jose Antonio Abreu. In San José it will be directed by SJSU Coordinator of Music Education, Dr. Diana Hollinger, an expert on El Sistema, and San José composer and MHC music education program director Jack Van Zandt.

“Ever since we learned about Venezuela’s El Sistema from Dr. Hollinger, it has been our goal to incubate a program that could benefit our community in a similar way,” added Ronstadt. “Through the leadership of Jack Van Zandt and Dr. Hollinger, MHC now has the opportunity to do just that. It brings together food for the body and food for the soul.”

MHC's cultural program delivery is provided within the context of recognizing the importance of maintaining healthy and active lifestyles for all ages. The locations chosen for the MHC program are places of community gathering where these and other social needs of children and their families can be assessed, monitored and met. The availability for consumption of nutritious food at the summer camp locations will go far in keeping our youngest citizens in good physical health. The experience of studying music with exacting and highly qualified teachers will provide children with an eye-opening and valuable educational opportunity, while performing in music and dance ensembles with fellow students of similar ages will create the communal experience that Jose Antonio Abreu—the founder of Venezuela’s El Sistema—holds up as the exemplary model of a mutually beneficial social organization.

“This is a tremendous opportunity for the children involved to explore the world of music and dance guided by top-notch artists and teachers,” said Hollinger. “This will be a community-building experience for all and it is an exciting first step in bringing the concepts of Venezuela’s now-famous El Sistema to San Jose. In this program, children will receive a high-quality, broad music and dance education, designed as both a social and arts project to help them better understand the world and see possibilities for their own futures.”

Summer camp participants will receive instruction in Mexican traditional and world music and dance, as well as general music instrumental technique and performance, music and keyboard fundamentals, percussion performance, music technology, vocal technique, choral performance and several dance forms. The participants will attend weekly concerts of music and dance from all over the world, including India, Africa, Asia, Mexico and Latin America. The concerts, produced in association with Oakland’s Listen for Life Foundation, will be by professional musicians at the SJSU Concert Hall. The children will be able to meet and interact with the musicians and learn about instruments and musical styles from several countries. Their music instructors and other professional musicians also will present concerts of live classical, jazz, mariachi and other genres.

The concerts will give the children listening experiences and rare opportunities to meet superb musicians. In addition, summer camp participants will learn to work together to compose, choreograph and perform their own musical/dance pieces. Every child will participate in performances of the musicals, choir, and mariachi and other music and dance ensembles at a gala concert on the final day of the camp.

“We are thrilled to host the program on our campus,” said Dr. Edward Harris, SJSU School of Music and Dance Director. “Anytime we can bring the community and the university together, it

is positive for all concerned.”

Enrollment is on a first come first served basis, and there is no fee. Enrollment will be available at San Jose State University in the Music Department on June 1 and 3 at 6 p.m., as well as at Mayfair Community Center on June 2 at 2:30 – 5 p.m. and at National Hispanic University. Call for more information 408 928 5551 or email Monica Ramos at [mramos@mhcviva.org](mailto:mramos@mhcviva.org).

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**About the Mexican Heritage Corporation**

With a mission to affirm, celebrate and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Mexican community and showcase multicultural arts within the region and nationally, MHC both presents and produces a vibrant array of multi-disciplinary arts programs in theatre, dance, and music education and in the visual arts. To learn more about the San Jose Mariachi and Mexican Heritage Festival, and MHC visit [www.sjmariachifestival.org](http://www.sjmariachifestival.org) and [www.mhcviva.org](http://www.mhcviva.org)