

Gov. Riley Recognizes the Alabama Center for the Book for Role in National Award Winning Campaign

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Center for the Book (ACFTB) was recognized by Governor Bob Riley for its partnership with the Alabama Tourism Department in the award-winning Year of Alabama Arts campaign.

The ACFTB was presented with a special certificate by the governor during an awards reception at the state capitol.

Gov. Riley announced that the Alabama Tourism Department received the Travel Industry Association's highest honor for its Year of Alabama Arts campaign, Governor Bob Riley announced Wednesday, as well as two other national competitions.

The TIA's Discover America Marketing Award was presented at its "Odyssey" awards banquet in Portland, Ore., on Oct. 28 and featured in the November issues of National Geographic Traveler.

The 2007 promotion also won the National Council of State Tourism Directors' "Mercury" award for best state promotion and Travel Weekly's "Magellan" award for promotion of culture and the arts in the U.S. and Canada.

"To win one top award is outstanding, but to win the best in three separate competitions must be unprecedented," Gov. Riley told several hundred tourism and arts representatives at a reception at the State Capitol.

The purpose of the 15-month campaign was "to put a huge spotlight on the arts, everything from architecture to dance and in between," said tourism director Lee Sentell said. "We had involvement from more than 60 communities which shows how important the arts are all over the state."

Staff member Brian Jones created a 56-page brochure that promoted exhibitions, festivals and landmarks in 64 towns and cities. Four television commercials featuring the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, arts festivals and Gee's Bend quilts were broadcast on Alabama Public Television, the Bravo network and Raycome Media stations, Sentell said.

A website created by Luckie & Company, a Birmingham ad agency, allowed individual artists to post profile of themselves and works for sale, he added.

Sentell said the Alabama Folk Art Exhibition sponsored with the Birmingham Museum of Art displayed works by some of the state's best-known "outsider" artists, including Lonnie Holley, Mose Tolliver, Jimmie Lee Sudduth and Jerry Brown.

"We were grateful that local newspapers in Alabama supported the arts campaign by focusing on hometown organizations, facilities and artists," the tourism director said. Many local groups included the campaign's colorful quilt logo developed in association with the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, Las Vegas and Florida preciously won the TIA "Discover America" award that is open to private companies and public agencies, officials said.

This was the second time in three years that Alabama received the "Mercury" award for best statewide promotion, winning earlier for the Year of Alabama Food. It was presented in Florida last month, Sentell said, adding that the agency also received the Southeast Tourism Society's top organization award for the arts promotion, the third time in four years to win.

Gov. Riley previously announced that 2009 will be celebrated as the Year of Alabama History and 2010 will be the Year of Small Town and Downtowns.