

Regional Culture Alliance of Greater Birmingham

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Regional Cultural Alliance Names Yarbrough First Executive Director

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. Feb. 19, 2004 -- The Board of Directors of the Regional Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham (RCA) announced today the appointment of Kathy Yarbrough as Executive Director.

Ms. Yarbrough, who assumes the position March 1, was selected after a nationwide search conducted by the Cambridge, Mass.-based firm of Wolf, Keens & Co., one of the premier arts consulting firms in the United States.

“Kathy was the unanimous and enthusiastic choice of the search committee,” said Cleophus Thomas Jr., Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of A.G. Gaston Corp., who helped to lead the search effort. “Her vision, ability to communicate ideas and proven fundraising experience make her perfect for this important job.”

Ms. Yarbrough previously served as the Executive Director of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra in Birmingham. She has held senior positions with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery and the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra in Ft. Lauderdale.

The creation of the RCA was one of the key recommendations of the Arts and Culture Master Plan released last year, and hiring a highly qualified executive director was a top priority of the RCA board, said Kate Nielsen, RCA Board Chair and President of The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham.

RCA’s mission is to promote arts and culture throughout the 12-county region by serving as a resource to arts and cultural organizations as well as individual artists; to raise funds for arts and cultural organizations; to serve as the primary spokesperson and advocate for the cultural community; and to facilitate collaboration within the cultural community. The RCA will provide technical assistance for arts organizations. It will develop, coordinate and promote cultural education and supply facility rental subsidies.

The RCA is a unique organization responsible for implementing the cultural master plan, which was developed to address the needs of arts and cultural organizations and individual artists -- with extensive input from both groups. “AmSouth Bank is proud to support the effort. The scope of the RCA will make a tremendous impact in the region,” said Rick Swagler, spokesman for AmSouth Bank, which has committed \$90,000 over three years to fund the RCA.

The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and Region 2020 released the Arts and Culture Master Plan in March 2003.

Region 2020 is a citizen-driven non-profit that advocates regional cooperation to improve quality of life in 12 Central Alabama counties. In the Region 2020 planning process, citizens called for the development of a coordinated cultural master plan. Its execution will help accomplish another goal, which was to develop a region that actively promotes and supports the arts and humanities, and provides more cultural opportunities for residents and tourists.

The 12 counties that are part of the Regional Culture Alliance of Greater Birmingham are those included in Region 2020 initiatives: Bibb, Blount, Calhoun, Chilton, Cullman, Etowah, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, Talladega, Tuscaloosa, and Walker.

Ms. Yarbrough said she is eager to return to the Birmingham area to become the first RCA executive director. “I am looking forward to working with all of the arts organizations in the region – large and small. This is a great opportunity to strengthen arts and culture regionally based on each community’s needs. I’m thrilled to be back in Birmingham, and to be doing something to contribute to the quality of life in the community that has been so good to me, and so generous in its support of the arts,” she said.

The consultant that oversaw the executive director search, Wolf, Keens, also developed the cultural master plan. Funders for the plan included The City of Birmingham and the Jefferson County Commission, as well as individual donors, corporate sponsors, the Alabama State Council on the Arts and local foundations, including The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham.

“This is an exciting time for the arts in our community,” Ms. Nielsen said. “As we begin to implement the Arts and Culture Master Plan, the cultural community will be strengthened. We anticipate many benefits – increased partnerships within the cultural community, increased public awareness of the importance of the arts, greater financial stability of organizations, increased arts and cultural education programs for our children – a true renaissance of arts throughout the community,” she said. “And, with Kathy, we have a proven leader who can help us accomplish these goals.”

The 22-member RCA board, announced at a public meeting in September 2003, is made up of arts, education, civic and business leaders, elected officials and cultural patrons from across Central Alabama. For a board list or a copy of the master plan, go to the Region 2020 website: www.region2020.org.

Ms. Yarbrough’s RCA office will be located temporarily at Region 2020, which is housed at the Center for Regional Planning and Design, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham. The phone number is 326-1100.