

**Bradenton
Cultural and Business
Alliance**

 John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation

 **Manatee
CHAMBER
FOUNDATION**


BRADENTON
Downtown
Development Authority

**For Immediate Release
June 3, 2008**

New Bradenton Cultural Alliance Will Pursue Arts as Economic Catalyst

Group Hires Cultural Consultant Bill Bulick to Guide Efforts

BRADENTON – An alliance of local partners today announced a new effort to strengthen the local economy and transform downtown Bradenton and Manatee County into an exciting cultural destination.

The Bradenton Cultural and Business Alliance (BCBA) includes 13 members with backgrounds in business, culture and government. Its efforts will build upon Bradenton’s existing cultural assets, including the Manatee Players, the South Florida Museum, ArtCenter Manatee, and the Village of the Arts. Alliance members have worked since December 2007 with a grant of \$234,000 from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The alliance has hired Bill Bulick of Portland, Ore., to serve as lead cultural planner. He is a nationally recognized arts agency leader with decades of experience as a cultural planner. His arrival was announced at a kickoff event today at the Manatee Chamber of Commerce.

To complement the BCBA’s efforts, the Manatee Chamber Foundation has engaged Americans for the Arts to conduct an economic impact study to gauge the financial scope of the arts and culture in Manatee County. It is funded by a \$20,000 Knight Foundation grant. Results are expected in early 2009.

“Understanding the impact local arts and cultural organizations have on our economy is key to helping chart the course for the future,” says Bob Bartz, president of the Manatee Chamber of Commerce. “Manatee County’s strong base of cultural organizations and amenities is an asset to economic development. Knight Foundation’s generosity in awarding this grant will broaden our understanding of the current impact the arts have and the potential to make an even bigger difference to our community’s economy and quality of life.”

“Knight Foundation is committed to a strong, ongoing partnership with Bradenton and Manatee County,” said Meredith Hector, Knight’s Bradenton program director. “We believe that strategic

collaborations like this have the potential to strengthen the area's economy, restore prominence to the city and help to make Bradenton and Manatee a cultural destination.”

“The results of the study, along with the work of the BCBA and Bill Bulick, will provide critical knowledge and help leverage the talents of key business leaders, city officials and cultural institutions for the economic benefit of the community,” Hector said.

The Bradenton Downtown Development Authority (BDDA) spearheads the BCBA and its efforts. Other partners include the ArtCenter Manatee, the Arts Council of Manatee County, the Bradenton Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, BB&T Bank, ComCenters Inc., Fawley Bryant Architects, the Manatee Chamber of Commerce, the Manatee County Clerk of Circuit Court, Manatee Memorial Hospital, Manatee Players, South Florida Museum and the Village of the Arts. Ex officio members include Meredith Hector, Marilyn Howard of the Manatee Community Foundation and Susie Walters, chair of Knight Foundation's local advisory committee.

“Our community's *Downtown by Design* master plan affirmed Bradenton's cultural assets will contribute mightily to our downtown's continuing renaissance,” said Mike Kennedy, executive director of the BDDA. “We thank Knight Foundation for its continued investment in our community, and we welcome the opportunity to develop greater collaboration between the City of Bradenton, Manatee County, the BDDA, the business community and our cultural partners.”

About Knight Foundation

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes journalism excellence worldwide and invests in the vitality of Bradenton and 25 communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation supports ideas and projects that create transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.

About Bradenton Downtown Development Authority

The Bradenton Downtown Development Authority manages the Bradenton Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and 14th Street CRA for the City of Bradenton. The BDDA invests the two special districts' tax increment financing to provide infrastructure and incentives for redevelopment. The BDDA's eight board members are appointed by the Mayor of the City of Bradenton for four-year terms and are confirmed by Bradenton's City Council. In February 2007, the BDDA and City Council unanimously adopted *Downtown by Design*, a master plan for the downtown Bradenton CRA. The Village of the Arts is located within the 14th Street CRA. For more, visit www.ddabradenton.com.

About Manatee Chamber Foundation

The Manatee Chamber Foundation's purpose is the advancement of education and understanding of economics, matters of public concern, finance, housing, human relations, problems of minority groups, science and technology, economic planning and development, international relations and other subjects related to improved efficiency, development, and acceleration of both the quality and quantity of economic growth and employment opportunities through any activity which tends to promote understanding, unification, or improved relationships between different economic or ethnic groups. For more, visit www.manateechamber.com/foundation.asp.

###