



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grand Opening Celebration of the New Visitor Center at Mission San Luis

TALLAHASSEE—Mission San Luis, the National Historic Landmark site of the western capital of Spanish Florida, announces the opening of its new on-site Visitor Center. The public is cordially invited to attend the free grand opening on Sunday, December 13, 2009, from 3 to 5 P.M. Everyone is also invited to participate in the annual commemorative mass in the re-created Franciscan church at 2 P.M. Officiated by Bishop John Ricard, the Mass honors over 100 Spanish missions that existed in *La Florida* in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The day's activities will include:

- A militia muster of The St. Augustine Spanish Garrison, a member unit of Florida Living History, Inc.
- Special exhibit of Spanish colonial art and artifacts on loan from Calynne and Lou Hill
- Native American and Spanish craft activities for children
- Period music and drama
- Sampling of wines, traditional paella, coffee, and desserts sponsored by Premier Beverage Company of Florida, Florida Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Juan Ten's Real Paella, Starbucks, and the University Center Club
- An opportunity to tour the new museum gift shop, Mission Room and reception hall, classrooms, and theatre
- Living history, including a Las Posadas procession at 12:30

The 24,000 square-foot Visitor Center's architecture evokes Spanish colonial traditions, but is designed to meet contemporary needs. Graceful colonnades and patios, soaring wooden-beamed ceilings, and natural floor and wall finishes combine to blend Mediterranean elegance with modern technology while maximizing function and energy sustainability. The Art in State Building Program commissioned Erick Villanueva to carve ceremonial wooden doors depicting themes from the Mission for a grand entrance to the new center.

According to Executive Director Bonnie McEwan, "Ever since construction began on May 3, 2008, we have been anticipating this day. The new and expanded exhibit hall, theatre, classrooms, and gift shop will enhance our visitors' experience for orientation, interpretation, and education. The 250-seat Mission Room banquet hall and other reception spaces provide entirely new resources to assist in our efforts to meet the community's needs. We look forward to welcoming you to San Luis on December 13 and throughout the coming years."

From 1656 to 1704, Mission San Luis was home to 1500 Apalachee Indian and Spanish residents. Today, life in the early 1700s is re-created through costumed interpreters, reconstructed buildings, exhibits, archaeology, and special events and programs. The new entrance is located at 2100 West Tennessee Street in Tallahassee, Florida. Mission San Luis is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Free through December 2009, the site will begin charging admission on January 1, 2010: Adults, \$5; Seniors, 65+ \$3; Children ages 5-17, \$2. Members, children under 5, and active duty military and families are FREE. Mission San Luis is managed by the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research. For more information, please call 850.245-6406 or visit www.missionsanluis.org.

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