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PLANS ANNOUNCED FOR CENTRAL HIGH INTEGRATION 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Over 40 Events Set Including Commemoration Ceremony On School Front Lawn

(Little Rock AR - Monday, July 16, 2007) – Forums exploring education and judicial aspects of school integration, a two-day festival, an ecumenical service, and an official commemoration ceremony are just a few of the events planned to mark the 50th anniversary of the integration of Little Rock Central High School by the Little Rock Nine. Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola was joined by members of the Central High Integration 50th Anniversary Commission and other community leaders in making the announcement.

“Fifty years ago today--July 16, 1957--our local newspapers carried stories of activities by the NAACP and segregationist organizations in regards to the Little Rock School District’s plans for gradual integration,” said Mayor Stodola. “In hindsight, this should have foreshadowed of the events of September 1957. But these stories were not on the front pages. Instead the major stories centered on President Eisenhower’s fiscal policies and a heat wave

in the state. While we may not have been prepared for the events that unfolded in September 1957, I am happy to say that we are preparing for the 50th Anniversary in September 2007.”

“The Central High Integration 50th Anniversary Commission has been planning since 2004 for this historic milestone,” the Mayor continued. “Not only are we announcing the Commission’s events, but there are over 30 other commemorative activities planned in Little Rock in the coming weeks and months. We expect this list will grow not only as we near September, but also beyond that time.”

The highlight of the Commission’s events is a Commemoration Ceremony to take place on Tuesday, September 25, 2007, at 10:00 am. on the front lawn of Little Rock Central High School. It was on September 25, 1957, that the Little Rock Nine were escorted into the school by members of the 101st Airborne and remained in the school. Speakers at this ceremony are being finalized and will be announced at a later date. The event is free of charge, but tickets are required to attend. To obtain tickets, people are encouraged to call 1-800-647-6880 or visit www.arkansasglobecoming.com. According to Virgil Miller, co-chair of the Commission, “The deadline for ticket requests is Friday, August 10. Due to limited seating, ticket requests will be fulfilled on a first-come, first served basis.”

Leading up to the Tuesday event will be a series of forums, a festival, and an ecumenical service. More details about each event will be released in the coming weeks. The schedule is:

- **September 20, 2007** - “Character and Courage: Where Have We Been, Where Are We Now, Where Do We Need to Be” a town hall meeting focusing on race and education. It will be at the Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas, 6420 Colonel Glenn Road. It will be in the evening, but the starting time is being finalized pending speakers’ availability.

- ***September 21, 2007***

Judicial Forums – a day-long series of speakers on a variety of legal topics. CLE credits will be offered for attorneys. Featured speakers include Dr. Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. and Theodore M. Shaw. This will be held at the UALR Bowen School of Law, which is co-sponsoring the forum with the Commission. An opening reception will be held on September 20.

- ***September 21-22, 2007***

WorldFest – “The World is Watching Us! From Civil Rights to Human Rights: Celebrating Our Diversity.” The Racial and Cultural Diversity Commission (RCDC) is partnering with the Central High Integration 50th Anniversary Commission in presenting this edition of the RCDC’s annual event. It will be held in historic MacArthur Park from 9:00am to 9:00pm both days.

- ***September 23, 2007***

An interfaith Ecumenical Service will be held at Robinson Center Music Hall at 3:00pm. It is being organized by Bishop Steven Arnold of St. Mark Baptist Church and Rev. Vic Nixon of Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church. The intention of this service is to bring the faith community together from all areas including those outside the Judeo-Christian background.

“Early on in this process, the Commission realized that we could not plan everything that people would want to do,” said

Miller. “We have been encouraging other organizations to participate by planning their own activities. The response has been overwhelming.” Miller estimates there have been over 30 events that have already taken place over the past year. “In the coming weeks, we know of over 30 more events that are scheduled—and we learn of new plans on a daily basis.”

Among the other events planned to commemorate this milestone anniversary are:

- The Grand Opening of the National Park Service’s new Visitor Center
- The Emancipation Proclamation on display at the Clinton Presidential Library
- A world premier play produced by the Arkansas Repertory Theatre
- Speakers at the Central Arkansas Library System, Clinton School for Public Service, Philander Smith College, and University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- Exhibits at the Arkansas Arts Center, Arkansas State Capitol, MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History, and Museum of Discovery
- Events in the Central High and surrounding neighborhoods including Unity in the Community and at the L.C. and Daisy Bates House.
- The Little Rock Nine Foundation is hosting a fundraising gala to benefit their scholarship program. This event is currently sold out.

“As you can imagine, to keep the public informed of this ever changing roster of events is difficult,” said Miller. “In order to make it easy on the public, we have partnered with Destination Arkansas to re-launch the Arkansas Globecoming website.” This website was used during the opening of the Clinton Presidential

Library to highlight activities and provide transportation, lodging, and ticket information for Little Rock citizens and visitors alike. “We appreciate Destination Arkansas for their partnership on this effort,” Miller added.

“When the Commission was deciding what events to plan, a key factor was that, as a City Commission, we felt that our events must be free,” said Miller. Every Commission-sponsored event is free and open to the public. “But I must stress that there is a limit to the number of people who can attend the event on September 25 in front of Little Rock Central High. In order to reserve a ticket, people must visit www.arkansasglobecoming.com or call 1-800-674-6880.”

“We anticipate those tickets will go fast,” noted Mayor Stodola. “The deadline to respond is August 10. But I would not wait to the last minute.”

In conjunction with the Commission’s education efforts, the State Department of Education is presenting an essay and art contest in each of the school districts within Arkansas. More information on this program will be announced in early August.

The members of the twenty-four member Central High Integration 50th Anniversary Commission were appointed by former Mayor Jim Dailey and current Mayor Mark Stodola. Virgil Miller, a local banker, and Nancy Rousseau, principal of Central High School, serve as co-chairs. Members of the Commission are: Annie Abrams, Rep. Fred Allen, Dr. Edith Altheimer, Ralph Brodie, Sen. Irma Hunter Brown, Shannon Butler, Dale Charles, Cynthia East, Ashley Fisher, Dr. André Guerrero, Schawnee Hightower, Rep. Wilhelmina Lewellen, Mike Madell, Dr. Katherine Mitchell, Blake Rutherford, Joy Secuban, Derrick Smith, Sen. Tracy Steele, Darrin Williams, and Reginald Wright.

Carlotta Walls LaNier and Minnijean Brown Trickey represent the Little Rock Nine on the Commission. The other

members of the Little Rock Nine are Melba Patillo Beals, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Gloria Ray Karlmark, Dr. Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Thelma Mothershed Wair.

Phyllis Dickerson is serving as the Special Events Coordinator staffing the work of the Commission.