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MORE THAN 200 OF THE STATE'S FINEST PERFORMERS HEADLINE *GREAT PERFORMERS OF ILLINOIS* IN MILLENNIUM PARK, SEPTEMBER 6-9

Today, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, the Illinois Arts Council, and the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism announced ***Great Performers of Illinois***, a free, state-wide celebration in Millennium Park that presents more than 200 of the finest performers from across Illinois beginning Wednesday, September 6, through Saturday, September 9. Chicagoans and visitors are invited to enjoy over 75 performances that feature a wide array of music including folk, traditional and alternative country, indie rock and blues; square dancing; drumming circles; a noted Abraham Lincoln impersonator; a yodeling, trick roping cowboy; and much more. For more information, call 1.877.CHICAGO or visit www.877chicago.com.

Great Performers of Illinois opens with a day of folk and country music on Wednesday, September 6, with Galena folk singer and storyteller Jim Post, and an evening of folk/rock bands from across the state featuring well-known country music singer Suzy Bogguss. Blues and indie rock head the line-up on Thursday, September 7, with the house music of DJ J-PHLIP from Champaign, and a Blues Night with Black Magic Johnson from Springfield, Jimmy Binkley and Preston Jackson from Peoria, and David Dee from East St. Louis. Friday, September 8, highlights include square dancing to the Flyover Zone from Urbana with caller Martha Tyner from Bloomington-Normal.

Great Performers of Illinois wraps up on Saturday, September 9, with a jazz and classical theme that features the Terry Hanson Ensemble from the Quad Cities and the world renowned Pacifica Quartet from Urbana. A full bill of entertainers from across the state complete the celebration with poetry, spoken word, storytelling, and puppetry performances throughout the park. Enjoy regional foods such as Illinois corn sausage chowder, Abe Lincoln pound cake, brownies, and the state snack, popcorn, as well as Illinois wines. Information about every county of Illinois will be available at regional tourism booths where children collect stickers of state symbols and guests can enter a raffle to win a free trip in Illinois.

"Great Performers of Illinois will fill Millennium Park with the music of talented performers from all over the state," said Lois Weisberg, commissioner, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. "Chicago has a rich tradition of collaborations that bring people together and it is only natural that we play host to this inaugural celebration of culture unique to Illinois."

"Illinois' greatest resource is its people, and we're excited for this unique opportunity to showcase the tremendous artistic talents that we have throughout our great state," said DCEO Director Jack Lavin. "Gov. Blagojevich and I are happy to be providing \$200,000 in support of the first ever Great Performers of Illinois event, which offers something for everyone and is not to be missed."

"The state of Illinois has an amazing wealth of performing artists," said Shirley R. Madigan, Illinois Arts Council Chairman. "Showcasing these renowned performers over four days in Millennium Park is a golden opportunity for Chicagoans -- and the world -- to experience first-hand some of the state's greatest assets."

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(Add One/Great Performers of Illinois)

Highlights of **Great Performers of Illinois** include:

- Wednesday, September 6, 4:30 p.m.
Pat Gaughan
Balcony one (Boeing Gallery)
Irish Folk performed by vocalist/guitarist Pat Gaughan of Ringwood, Illinois. Her original material ranges from lyrical ballads to acoustic rock, blues and traditional Irish songs.
- Thursday, September 7, 4:30 p.m.
Ellis Kell & 'Detroit' Larry Davison
Balcony Two (Boeing Gallery)
Hailing from the Quad Cities, Ellis Kell & 'Detroit' Larry Davison perform as an acoustic blues duo featuring guitar, harmonica and vocals. The group has shared the stage with B.B. King, Willie Nelson, The Blue Band, and Little Feat.
- Thursday, September 7, 5:30 p.m.
Lorenzo Goetz
Wrigley Square Stage
Champaign, Illinois' Lorenzo Goetz indie rock band combines bouncy rhythms and clever wordplay to create infectious, head-nod music. Its energetic live shows and vintage style have garnered praise from around the globe.
- Friday, September 8, 6:30 p.m.
Square Dancing on the Promenade
North and South Chase Promenades
Following dance lessons, participants can dance to the bluegrass sounds of Tangleweed (from Lombard, Illinois) and the square dance and country music of Flyover Zone (from Urbana, Illinois). Martha Tyner of Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, calls the dance.
- Saturday, September 9, 2006 12:30 p.m.
Drum Circle- Rocky Maffit and Chad Dunn
Great Lawn
Percussionists Rocky Maffit and Chad Dunn of Champaign, Illinois present an explosive and entertaining exploration of drums from around the world combined with the latest percussion technology.
- Saturday, September 9, 1 p.m.-2 p.m.
Dennis Stroughmatt and Creole Stomp
Wrigley Square- World Music Stage
Creole Stomp carries the torch of French Creole music and culture from Southern Illinois.
- Saturday, September 9, 3 p.m.-4 p.m.
Sharon Clark- Gospel, Jazz, and Rhythm and Blues
Balcony Two (Boeing Gallery)
A native of East St. Louis, Illinois, Sharon began singing in the church with her father at the age of six. This little lady with a big voice has shared the stage with such greats as Albert King, Herbie Hancock, Ike and Tina Turner.

Great Performers of Illinois is presented by the Illinois Arts Council in partnership with the Illinois Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism, and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. For detailed information about **Great Performers of Illinois** and to book hotel accommodations, visit www.877chicago.com, www.enjoyillinois.com or call 1.877.CHICAGO.

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(Add Two/Great Performers of Illinois)

About Millennium Park

Millennium Park is located in the heart of downtown Chicago. It is bordered by Michigan Avenue to the east, Columbus Drive to the west, Randolph Street to the north and Monroe Street to the south. Convenient parking is located in the Millennium Park Garage (entrance on Columbus at Monroe or Randolph) and at the Grant Park North and East Monroe Garages, all located within a short walking distance to Millennium Park.

Millennium Park is an award-winning center for art, music, architecture and landscape design. The result of a unique partnership between the City of Chicago and the philanthropic community, the 24.5-acre park features the work of world-renowned architects, planners, artists and designers. Among Millennium Park's prominent features are the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion, the most sophisticated outdoor concert venue of its kind in the United States; the interactive Crown Fountain by Jaume Plensa; the contemporary Lurie Garden designed by the team of Gustafson Guthrie Nichols, Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel; and Anish Kapoor's hugely popular Cloud Gate sculpture. Since its opening in July 2004, Millennium Park has hosted millions of people, making it one of the most popular destinations in Chicago.

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