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## **Southern Arts Federation Becomes South Arts** Introducing a New Identity and Strategic Plan

On March 9, 2010, Gerri Combs, executive director of South Arts (formerly Southern Arts Federation) unveiled the organization's new identity during a webcast.

Reflecting South Arts' vision of community, connections, inspiration and global reach, the new identity reinforces the organization's commitment to creating and sharing knowledge about the arts in the South and the role of a regional arts organization.

South Arts' Strategic Planning Committee, in collaboration with consultants Marmillion & Co., has spent the last year redefining their organizational strategy, positioning, and branding. Research with South Arts constituents, key thought leaders, in the form of individual and group interviews, were conducted. Their feedback signaled the need for South Arts' to respond to the arts environment and cultural trends with a regional perspective, address arts-related issues important to our region, and to link the South with the nation and the world through the arts.

"The history of the former Southern Arts Federation, now South Arts, has been that we had a strong partnership with our nine states as well as the National Endowment for the Arts and other partners," said Todd P. Lowe, chair of the South Arts board of directors. "And we feel confident that those relationships are not going to change because of this plan but will, in fact, probably deepen and we hope to expand them in more meaningful ways."

"I think as you look at our revised mission, vision and identity, you'll see a real commitment to thinking deeply about who we are in the South," said Margaret S. Mertz, Ph.D., South Arts board executive vice chair and leader of the planning committee. "We want South Arts to fly at the 30,000 foot level. We will land in strategic spots to make our work happen but we are committed to this broader vision, this upper level view, of what the issues are that face the South."

These changes are being implemented as the organization celebrates its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary. South Arts, a nonprofit regional arts organization, was founded in 1975 to build on the

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South's unique heritage and enhance the public value of the arts. The organization works in partnership with the nine state arts agencies of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. South Arts is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, foundations, corporations, individuals and member states.

The strategic plan summary document and a recording of the webcast in its entirety can be viewed at [www.southarts.org/publications](http://www.southarts.org/publications).

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