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THE WESTIN KIERLAND, SHARLOT HALL MUSEUM AND ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY HONOR 2009 ARIZONA CULTUREKEEPERS

~Program Recognizes 10 Arizona Residents Dedicated to Preserving the Culture and Heritage of the State~

PHOENIX/SCOTTSDALE — In conjunction with the Sharlot Hall Museum, Arizona Historical Society, and Historian Marshall Trimble, The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa is honoring 10 Arizona residents for making a positive impact on the state's history, culture, environment and/or economy.

Selected from more than 100 nominees, the 2009 Arizona Culturekeepers honorees will be recognized at a luncheon ceremony on Sunday, December 20 at The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa. The public is invited to participate in the uniquely Arizonan event. Tickets are \$45. To purchase tickets, the public is encouraged to call The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa at 480-624-1356. Proceeds will benefit the Arizona Culturekeepers program, Sharlot Hall Museum and Arizona Historical Society.

The 2009 Culturekeepers include Jim Turner, Vince Salmon, Sam Campana, Bill Nebeker, Winn Bundy, Chris Isaacs, Kay Benedict, Lillian Hoff, and the "A Troop," Arizona Rough Rider Historical Association. For a complete description of each honoree, please see below or visit www.kierlandresort.com/arizona~culturekeepers.

"We're proud to acknowledge these Arizonans that have contributed so much," said Marshall Trimble, Arizona's official state historian and chairman of the Culturekeepers program. "These are longtime Arizona residents who spend their days working to better their communities, but rarely are recognized for their contributions."

Each Culturekeeper will be presented with an award that describes the individual's or group's contributions to the state. Plaques with photos of each honoree will be displayed along the walls of the Resort's meeting space, including Culturekeepers Hall, a special area of the hotel adjacent to the Kierland Grand Ballroom.

Kay Benedict (Casa Grande) - For almost sixty years, Kay Hill Benedict has used her tireless energy effectively for the benefit of others. Since its founding in 1964, Benedict has given thousands of hours to the Casa Grande Valley Historical Society. She continues to work as the volunteer archivist after having served as curator, Executive Director, and on the board. She has been active at the state level on the boards of the Museum Association of Arizona, the Arizona Historical Society and the Friends of Arizona Archives. From 1994-2007 she was a guiding force on the annual committee for the Arizona History Convention. Benedict was a founding member of the Casa Grande Friends of the Arts and represented her community on the Pinal County Fine Arts Council.

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Winn Bundy (Benson) - In 1972 Winn Bundy opened a bookstore specializing in Southwestern books right there on her ranch just north of Benson. It took creativity, energy, and persistence, but 35 years later the doors are still open, offering more than 150,000 books in a wide range of topics to bibliophiles from all over the world. Bundy believes in the power of books, and has always felt it her duty to serve not just readers, but authors, editors and publishers as well. From the very beginning the store offered a book mobile, school programs, teachers' aids, and writers' festivals. In the past three and a half decades she has helped hundreds of Southwestern writers get their start. She specializes in small press books that do not appear in big chain stores, and connects authors with publishers to get their works in print. This year she was the recipient of the "2009 Juliana Yoder Friends of the Humanities Award" from the Arizona Humanities Council.

Sam Campana (Scottsdale) - Former Mayor of Scottsdale from 1996 to 2000 and prior to being mayor, she served eight years on the Scottsdale City Council from 1986 to 1994. She helped conceive and craft the Arizona Preserve Initiative which will preserve 19,000 acres of the Sonoran Desert from development. This also established the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. In her capacity as mayor, Campana also appointed a historic preservation task force which under her supervision was the forerunner of the current Scottsdale Historic Preservation Commission, the city commission that presents Scottsdale historic properties to the City Council for preservation. Campana was a founding member of the Scottsdale Arts Center Association in 1975 and served as its first volunteer chairman and first woman president of the 2,000-member organization. In 1988, she was named Arizona Arts Advocate of the Year and as mayor brought the Smithsonian Icons Exhibit to Scottsdale in 1977. Her major project has been partnering with the City of Phoenix in developing the Audubon Education and Nature Center at the Rio Solado Restoration area in Phoenix.

Lillian Hoff (Nogales) - Lillian Hoff founded Young Audiences of Santa Cruz County over 40 years ago, maintaining an office in her home for 17 years as volunteer executive director. The National Young Audiences Chapter sponsored art programs in all Santa Cruz County schools and paid staff who managed the office donated by the Nogales School District. She founded Very Special Arts (VSA), a federal program sponsored by the Kennedy Center of Performing Arts. In 1988 she founded the Santa Cruz County 1904 Courthouse Preservation Commission followed by Friends of the 1904 Courthouse. This presented the possible sale of the historic building when county staff moved into a new complex. Thanks to succeeding supportive supervisors, the historic building is now restored and houses the Cochise College campus, Arizona Rangers and Arizona Cowbells Museum, and is the official start of the Juan Bautista de Anza trail.

Chris Isaacs (Springerville) - He is considered by many to be one of the finest cowboy poets in the country. He has been published in numerous magazines, including "American Cowboy" and "Western Horseman." He has two books of his work published, "Bringing it Home", and "Rhymes, Reasons & Packsaddle Proverbs." The latter was nominated for the "Western Heritage Award" by the Cowboy Hall of Fame and winner of the "Will Rogers Medallion Award for Excellence" by the Academy of Western Artists. In 2005 Isaacs was the recipient of the "Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering Gail I. Gardner Award."

Vince Salmon (Kingman) - Vince Salmon has been called a "Walking Chamber of Commerce for old Route 66." He spent some 22 years telling the story of the fabled "Mother Road." He joined the Route 66 Association of Arizona soon after it was founded and took it upon himself to record every event occurred along the highway. He also wrote the booklet "Family Tour Guide I and II for Route 66. He was involved in all 22 annual Fun Runs and his 1957 Chevy pickup graced many parades and events in surrounding towns as well as Kingman. He traveled historic Route 66 many times between Chicago and Los Angeles from 1946 until his death.

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Verlyne Meck (Buckeye) - Verlyne Meck is a native of Buckeye, Arizona. Meck graduated from Liberty Elementary School, Buckeye Union High School (BUHS), and Grand Canyon College. She earned a Masters Degree from Arizona State University and a Library Endorsement from the University of Arizona. In 1985, she returned to BUHS as librarian and yearbook advisor. She established and preserved an extensive archival collection of timelines, reunion gatherings, yearbooks, sports records, photos and memorabilia. She has a special passion for collecting and preserving Buckeye history and serves as a board member of the Buckeye Valley Museum Historical Society. In 2007, she authored her first book about Buckeye, "Images of America: Buckeye." She is currently working on her second book, "Images of America: Buckeye Then and Now" that is set to be released in 2010. She was the 1988 "Buckeye Citizen of the Year" and the 2005 "Community Volunteer of the Year." After retiring from BUHS in 2006, the library was named Verlyne Meck

Bill Nebeker (Prescott) - Bill Nebeker first experienced Arizona in 1947 when his father was a cowboy on the Long Meadow Ranch near Prescott. In 1965 George Phippen's Western art changed his life forever, as a new passion filled his mind, hands and heart. He would sculpt Arizona cowboys, Indians and historic figures with detail and absolute authenticity. Nebeker became a member of the Cowboy Artists of America in 1978. Since then Bill has won Gold and Silver in sculpture, Best of Show and the Phoenix Art Museum Purchase Award, as well as being twice elected President by his fellow artists. His deep respect for cowboys and ranchers who live and raise their families in time honored American traditions, speaks volumes about Bill's character. Cowboys gathering cattle in the rocky, dry, mountains and ravines near Prescott, inspire Bill because their work ethic reflects his more than 40 years of excellence in sculpture.

Jim Turner (Tucson) - Jim Turner taught Arizona history at Canyon del Oro High School in 1976, but it was 20 years later before he returned to graduate school. He received his masters in U.S. History in 1999 from the University of Arizona and taught Arizona history as an adjunct professor for the following year. After seven years of persistent applications, Turner finally became Community Outreach Historian for the Arizona Historical Society, where he supported non-profit history museums throughout the state. As a combination booster and technical advisor, Turner gathered "friends in small places," and grew to love and respect the volunteers who dedicate themselves to preserving our history. Over the past ten years he has written dozens of history articles, co-authored a 4th-grade textbook, taught Arizona history to museum docents and the general public, and given presentations and workshops in every corner of the state. Although retired from the Arizona Historical Society, Turner is more active than ever as a freelance historian, editor, author, teacher, presenter, researcher, and museum consultant.

"A Troop," Arizona Rough Rider Historical Association - Today, Prescott's own "A" Troop is a ceremonial and re-enactment unit whose purpose is to honor all American War Veterans and to portray, in an historically accurate way, the life and times of the Arizona Rough Riders. With a special commission from the Governor of Arizona, "A" troop stands ready to serve their community. Today their mission is to portray, in a historically accurate manner, the life and times of the Arizona Rough Riders, Troop "1/A" Prescott, Arizona, and their society in the 1898 period, and contribute to the betterment of our community.

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The Arizona Culturekeepers were selected based on the following criteria:

- A Culturekeeper must have worked to preserve the image of Arizona.
- This individual must maintain the traditions, rituals and/or cultures that have made Arizona a home and a preferred travel destination for decades. These could be artistic, ethnic or historic traditions or activities. These could be actions taken to preserve Arizona's natural environment or animal habitat.
- A Culturekeeper must have a long-time commitment to services as a keeper or influencer of Arizona culture and have served the state through paid or volunteer efforts.
- The recognition will honor the individual who has demonstrated a passionate dedication to the issue, hobby or endeavor that keeps Arizona's culture alive.
- This individual must have lived within Arizona's borders during the time for which they are being recognized, and they must be living.

About Arizona CultureKeepers:

Working in conjunction with the Official State Historian, Marshall Trimble, The Westin Kierland Resort & Spa designed the Culturekeepers program to recognize state residents who are committed to upholding the traditions, rituals and culture of Arizona. Established in 2002, the Culturekeepers will continue to announce and recognize 10 individuals during an annual event at The Westin Kierland for the next four years. By the state's centennial in 2012, 100 Culturekeepers will have been honored at the resort. The selection committee is led by Marshall Trimble, Official State Historian and was originated by Katherine "Kax" Herberger, longtime Valley philanthropist, who passed away in 2003.

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