April 26, 2006

Dear Potential Folklife Festival Volunteer:

You are invited to be a part of the 40th Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival to be held outdoors on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., Friday, June 30 through Tuesday, July 4, and Friday, July 7 through Tuesday, July 11, 2006. Produced by the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, the Festival is a living exhibition of traditional culture featuring outstanding musicians, muralists, craftspeople, storytellers, cooks, and occupational specialists.

Volunteers are critical to the success of the Festival and work closely with our staff as well as with Festival participants of various backgrounds. Past volunteers say they keep coming back to the Festival because it offers “great fun, great people, and lots to learn.” Some volunteers have returned for as many as 25 years!

We are excited about this year’s programs and hope you will be too:

**Alberta at the Smithsonian**
The Festival features the cultural vitality and diversity of Alberta, as the western Canadian province completes its centennial celebration. With the fastest-growing economy in Canada, Alberta’s wealth extends beyond its oil sands and gas fields, beyond its majestic Rocky Mountains and rich agricultural plains, and beyond its legendary ranches and thriving cosmopolitan, multicultural cities to its greatest treasure: its people. Dynamic performances, demonstrations, and educational programs by some of Alberta’s finest will celebrate the living traditions that make and sustain the unique culture of this Canadian province.

**Carriers of Culture: Living Native Basket Traditions**
This program examines how native baskets—and their makers—are literally and symbolically “carriers of culture.” Festival visitors will see master Native artists of North America and Hawai‘i demonstrate the outstanding weaving traditions of their respective communities. They will learn about the vital connection between Native basketry and the natural environment and the interrelationship of basketry to other tribal cultural knowledge such as ceremonies, language, stories, dance, song, and foodways. The program...
explores how Native basket weavers have acquired and sustained their extraordinary skills and knowledge, passing these treasured traditions on to new generations.

**Nuestra Música: Latino Chicago**  
This program highlights the music and cultural expressions of Chicago’s diverse Latino communities and explores their role in shaping contemporary society, creating community, and confirming cultural identity. Music and dancers engage the public in a variety of settings, from workshops and narrative sessions to concerts. Mural and graphic artists complement musicians and dancers by evoking the visual imagery of Chicago’s Latino neighborhoods. Additional workshops highlight Chicago’s Latino radio traditions and artisans whose crafts are related to music and dance. Special guest performances by Smithsonian Folkways recording artists, and musical groups participating in the Cultural Institute of Mexico’s Afro-Mex Festival, round out the program.

**Been in the Storm So Long**  
This special evening concert series will feature African-American musical traditions from the area devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Produced in collaboration with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the concerts will present New Orleans jazz, brass bands, rhythm & blues, Mardi Gras Indians, and gospel music. The city’s unique Afro-Caribbean and blues spirit continues in the tradition of the greatest gospel and rhythm & blues legends. Mardi Gras Indians carry on the majesty of a street parade tradition, combining colorful costumes with West African-influenced chants and rhythms. The three concerts celebrate the perseverance of the musicians of New Orleans.

As a volunteer you may be asked to assist stage managers, sell programs, help with the audiovisual recording of performances and presentations, or lend a hand with the many administrative duties essential to the success of the Festival. These are only a few of the opportunities available to volunteers (see the attached Work Position Descriptions).

If you would like to volunteer your service, please complete the Volunteer Questionnaire on-line at [www.folklife.si.edu](http://www.folklife.si.edu) and return it to me as soon as possible.

A volunteer orientation will be held on Saturday, June 24, 2006, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon, at which time there will be a tour of the Festival site, staff introductions, and meetings with lead volunteers. If you have questions or comments, please contact me by telephone at 202.275.2003 or by email at [luis-watsonj@si.edu](mailto:luis-watsonj@si.edu).

We look forward to welcoming back veteran Festival volunteers and meeting newcomers.

Cordially,

Judy Luis-Watson  
Volunteer Coordinator