TD Bank to sponsor art fest

Artisphere welcomes 3-year commitment

By Paul Hyde
Arts Writer

TD Bank committed Thursday to being Artisphere's presenting sponsor through 2014, continuing the corporate support begun in 2005 by Carolina First Bank, which TD Bank acquired a year ago.

Artisphere, the annual three-day visual arts festival, draws tens of thousands of people to downtown Greenville to shop for art and enjoy music, food and other attractions.

"Supporting the community where we live and work has long been one of TD Bank's core values," said David Lominack, market president for TD Bank. "We are proud to play a part in this great event that puts our city in the national arts spotlight."

Kerry Murphy, Artisphere's executive director, said that having the festival's top sponsor in place for the next three years ensures the event's stability and credibility, helping to leverage other grants and corporate support.

"It gives us the ability to approach other sponsors," Murphy said. "TD Bank's commitment carries a lot of weight. It certainly solidifies the plan for the future as far as the sustainability and feasibility of the festival."

TD Bank officials declined to put a price tag to its commitment but said support had increased by 15 percent from Carolina First's annual sponsorship. Carolina First had provided its sponsorship since 2005 on a year-to-year basis while TD Bank upped its committed to three years.

"We felt that if we could make the commitment for the next three years, the festival could go to the next level, too," Lominack said. "We as a bank truly feel that it is our obligation and responsibility to support these kinds of events that are important to our community."

TD Bank, known as "America's most convenient bank," is one of the 10 largest banks in the U.S., with more than 7.4 million customers.

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Lominack said the festival contributes significantly to Greenville's quality of life and economic vitality.

"The people who come from out of town to visit the festival often stay downtown, eat downtown and shop downtown," he said.

"The festival is such a critical economic development component. When companies are looking to Greenville to relocate, these are the kind of things they look at. Festivals of this caliber attract people to the area."

Some Artisphere proceeds benefit local arts groups. That makes the festival unique in the nation, Murphy said. She announced Thursday at a press conference that $105,000 had been donated to local arts groups by the festival since 2005.

"This festival, just like Fall for Greenville, is one of the things that makes Greenville truly special," Mayor Knox White said.

The eight annual Artisphere takes place May 11-13.

Henry Horowitz, Artisphere's founder and president emeritus, said that planning for the annual festival began almost 10 years ago when White contacted him and said, "I think we need a world-class arts festival in Greenville."

Horowitz said the festival "has provided a very large economic benefit for the entire Upstate."

Alan Ethridge, the executive director of the Metropolitan Arts Council and an Artisphere board member, said the festival "has had a profound impact on Greenville."

"Attendees are able to experience the best that Greenville has to offer in both the visual and the performing arts, and the many exhibits and performances create awareness of the city's outstanding cultural resources," he said.