

**FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE****The Forum of Civics Building and Gardens to Celebrate Centennial**

HOUSTON, TEXAS, July 28, 2010 — Plans are underway to celebrate a rare jewel in Houston, as the Forum of Civics Building in the Upper Kirby District marks its 100th year. This historic building and gardens is an oasis of green near the bustling corner of Kirby and Westheimer. In an era of the “teardown” and building to the lot line, the Forum of Civics building is a beacon of beauty, scale, and preservation. Originally built in 1910 as a county school, it was remodeled in 1925 under the supervision of renowned architect, John Staub, as headquarters for the Forum of Civics, founded by Will Hogg. Hogg’s notion was to develop a comprehensive plan for Houston’s public spaces, and in his own words, “to stimulate civic pride and to combine many and varied forces for the betterment and beautification of our city and county.” The River Oaks Garden Club purchased the Forum in 1942 and has continued Hogg’s dream of “educational work directed primarily to stimulating knowledge and love of gardening, aiding in the protection of native plants and birds, and encouraging civic planting and planning.”

River Oaks Garden Club members Cathy Brock and Sally Matthews are co-chairing the Forum’s Centennial Celebration on October 27, 2010. Grammy Award-winning vocalist and Café Carlyle favorite, Steve Tyrell, will perform. All proceeds benefit the preservation of the Forum’s building and gardens, ensuring the future of a Houston icon.

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**Fact Sheet for the Forum Centennial Celebration**

Event:	The Forum Centennial Celebration 1910 – 2010: Honor the Past, Celebrate the Future
Benefiting:	The preservation of the Forum of Civics Building and Gardens
Date:	Wednesday, October 27, 2010
Place:	The Forum of Civics Building 2503 Westheimer Road, Houston, Texas 77098
Time:	7:00 pm
Content:	Cocktails and seated dinner, featuring a special performance by Grammy Award-winning vocalist Steve Tyrell
Dress:	Golden Age Glamour or Cocktail attire
Event Chairs:	Cathy Brock and Sally Matthews
Honorary Chairs:	Carol Butler and Lynne Bonham
Ticket Prices:	Individual tickets starting at \$500
Reservations:	Nancy Abendshein, <a href="mailto:nancyabend@aol.com">nancyabend@aol.com</a> and Anne French, <a href="mailto:afrench454@aol.com">afrench454@aol.com</a>
Reason to Celebrate:	The Forum of Civics turns 100! The Forum Building and Gardens, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, continues the mission of founder Will Hogg, “to stimulate civic pride and to combine many and varied forces for the betterment and beautification of our city and county.”
Website:	<a href="http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org">www.riveroaksgardenclub.org</a>

**About the Forum of Civics Building and Gardens**

Built in 1910 and owned by the River Oaks Garden Club since 1942, the Forum of Civics building is of recognized historical significance and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Its gardens provide valuable green space in the heart of the city and are open to the public free of charge.

Initially built for use as a county school, the building was remodeled in 1925 under the supervision of renowned architect by John F. Staub as headquarters for the Forum of Civics founded by Will Hogg. Hogg, who chaired the Houston Planning Commission, organized the Forum of Civics to develop a comprehensive plan for Houston's public spaces and, in his words, "to stimulate civic pride and to combine many and varied forces for the betterment and beautification of our city and county." One of the Forum's projects was the citywide planting of crepe myrtles, roses, and shade trees, all of which were donated by Will Hogg.

The Hogg estate bequeathed the building to the University of Texas in 1930, and in 1942, the River Oaks Garden Club purchased the Forum of Civics building. The UT Board of Regents stipulated that the Club "carry on the educational work directed primarily to stimulating knowledge and love of gardening, aiding in the protection of native plants and birds, and encouraging civic planting and planning."

In the ensuing years, the River Oaks Garden Club has carried out this charge. The Forum building has been home to horticultural workshops, flower shows, and in conjunction with the annual Azalea Trail, educational exhibits. The Club has also established model gardens on the Forum grounds for demonstration purposes. The first such garden, a Victory Garden, was planted during World War II to encourage Houstonians to grow their own vegetables. In 1955, three formal gardens designed by J. Allen Myers, Jr. and Herbert Skogland were installed. The Club later installed two additional, more informal gardens: one of native Texas plants and another of seasonal plantings.

The Forum of Civics Building and Gardens are open to the public Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm and are available for special events.

<http://riveroaksgardenclub.org/Forum.cfm>

**About the River Oaks Garden Club**

The River Oaks Garden Club, a non-profit organization, was formed in 1927 and is a member of the Garden Club of America. The purpose of the River Oaks Garden Club is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening, to share the advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement.

[www.riveroaksgardenclub.org](http://www.riveroaksgardenclub.org)

## **2010 – 2011 River Oaks Garden Club Activities**

October 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>

### **Pink Elephant Sale**

Houston's Oldest Rummage Sale!

New Location: HESS Building, 5340 Westheimer, between Yorktown and Chimney Rock

October 27<sup>th</sup>

### **The Forum Centennial Celebration 1910 –2010: Honor the Past, Celebrate the Future**

An evening seated dinner featuring a special performance by Grammy Award-winning vocalist Steve Tyrell.

The Forum of Civics Building, 2503 Westheimer Road

March 4<sup>th</sup> – 6

### **The Azalea Trail**

The 51<sup>st</sup> annual tour of spectacular homes and gardens features the gardens of Bayou Bend.

April 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>

### **FLORESCENCE**

This biennial flower and horticulture show is presented by The River Oaks Garden Club,

The Garden Club of Houston, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Beck Building, 5601 Main

[www.flohouston.org](http://www.flohouston.org)