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PRESS RELEASE

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MUSEUM OPTS OUT OF C.M. RUSSELL ART AUCTION

GREAT FALLS, MT – After a 41-year relationship, nearly \$6 million in donations, and priceless publicity, the C.M. Russell Museum has broken ties with the Ad Club and the C.M. Russell Art Auction, choosing to no longer be a beneficiary of funds generated by the Auction.

“We respectfully inform you that our Executive Committee has determined that the current organization of the Russell Auction is...no longer in the Museum’s best interest,” Museum representatives stated in a letter to the Ad Club.

“We need to take more control of our own destiny and fundraising,” Museum CEO Darrell Beauchamp said in a meeting with Ad Club.

According to Ad Club President Jack May, “We were shocked and saddened to receive notification that the C.M. Russell Museum no longer desires to maintain their relationship with the C.M. Russell Art Auction.” Despite the change, Ad Club “will continue to produce our long-standing event, as we have done for 41 years,” May said. The 42nd annual C.M. Russell Art Auction will be held March 17-20, 2010 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls.

“The Auction week has been a great boon for Great Falls generally, we commend you for it, and we support your efforts for these events to continue,” the Museum stated in their letter.

“This new era of the Auction is an opportunity for Ad Club to continue its dedication to the Great Falls community,” May explained. “We are proud of what we have been able to donate to the C.M. Russell Museum, along with the financial impact to the community and state these past 41 years. We will examine benefitting other worthwhile organizations in the area for the future,” he said.

The C.M. Russell Art Auction was started in 1969 as a fundraiser for Ad Club after their previous fundraiser, a Cadillac Dinner, was no longer feasible. After a successful inaugural event, Ad Club members donated a portion of their proceeds to the C.M. Russell Museum, a tradition that continued throughout the history of the event. In June of this year, Ad Club presented the Museum with a gift of \$120,829.44. This gift brought the Ad Club’s total donation to the Museum to over \$5.7 million.

“We are very proud of our gift this year,” said 2009 Auction Chair Pam Parsons. “Despite the difficult economic times, our Club was able to host a successful Auction and generate enough money to pay for Auction and Ad Club expenses, as well as this generous donation to the Russell Museum.”

The Museum, however, feels differently. “Up until this year, the Ad Club’s discretionary charitable donations to the Museum from Auction proceeds were sufficient to justify the Museum’s participation in the Auction,” Museum Board of Directors Chairman David Solberg stated in another letter to Ad Club. “This year’s donation, however...was insufficient to cover our costs in money, facilities, and staff time.”

Ad Club carries the burden of the majority of Auction expenses, with the exception of art storage, the installation of Auction art at the Museum approximately a month prior to the event, and a Museum hosted reception held on Thursday of Auction week. In exchange, the Museum is able to generate revenue from patrons visiting the Museum to view the Auction art, and a sponsor is secured by Ad Club to help cover the costs of the Thursday reception.

“It is unfortunate the Museum doesn’t feel the gift they were given this year is enough to justify their continued involvement with the Auction,” May said. “Our Ad Club members work hard year-round, volunteering thousands of hours to make the Auction as successful as possible. They should all be proud of what they accomplish each March,” he said.

“We wish the Museum much success in their future endeavors,” May continued. “I am confident the Ad Club will produce another successful Auction this March, and that Great Falls will continue to flourish as the Western Art Capital of the World.”

Ad Club is an award-winning organization dedicated to furthering effective advertising, marketing, and public relations within the Great Falls community. The Club meets bi-monthly, bringing in regional and national speakers to further educate members on advertising and communications practices. Founded in 1957, Ad Club is one of the strongest networking organizations in Great Falls. In addition, Ad Club sponsors annual high school and college scholarships, a Special Projects grant, and in-kind public service campaigns for local non-profit organizations. For more information on Ad Club, please call 761-6453 or visit www.gfaf.com.

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