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TEXAS MUSIC PROJECT LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT SCHOOL MUSIC PROGRAMS

Willie Nelson, the Texas Music Community, State Arts and Education Organizations and the State of Texas Join Voices For Music Education Campaign

AUSTIN, Texas, July 28, 2003 – The eyes of Texas are upon music education as the Social Marketing Resource Center, a non-profit organization, today announced the inception of the Texas Music Project, a new statewide initiative working to strengthen and restore music education in Texas schools.

Out of a growing concern for the decline in funding for school music programs, the Texas Music Project brings together Willie Nelson and other Texas musicians; performance venues from across the state; a network of music, educator and arts organizations; and individual and corporate sponsors – all of which have donated time, talent and money to support music education in Texas.

The mission of the Texas Music Project is to create meaningful education programs for Texas schools in need, raise awareness of the positive benefits of music education on students and promote the Texas music industry. These efforts will be driven through a long-term public awareness campaign entitled “Don’t Mess With Texas Music™.” As part of the campaign, the Texas Music Project will release a series of annual compilation CDs featuring Texas-proud artists, ranging from Clint Black to Erykah Badu, with proceeds from sales supporting music education in Texas schools. In addition, the Texas Music Project will create a network of clubs, music venues, and community festivals and events throughout the state to raise awareness and funding for local schools while showcasing the talent of Texas musicians and students.

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"It upsets me to see music cut from school budgets," said Willie Nelson, honorary chairman of the Texas Music Project. "Everyone supporting the Project is doing it because they love music, and because they understand music education helps kids reach their full potential, regardless of what they grow up to be. We all want Texas kids to have that chance."

The first volume of the "Don't Mess With Texas Music" CD series, to be released in September, will feature a variety of country, rock, blues and soul music from 21 Texas artists, including Stevie Ray Vaughn, The Dixie Chicks, Lucinda Williams, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Boz Scaggs, Marcia Ball, Delbert McClinton and others. The CD will be sold at all Texas Starbucks, Tom Thumb Food and Pharmacy, Randalls Food Markets, Brook Mays Music locations (including H&H and Caldwell Music stores), CD retailers throughout the state, convention and visitor bureaus, and via the Texas Music Project's web site (www.texasmusicproject.org). Local schools and arts, education and music organizations also will be able to use the CD as a fundraiser.

In addition to the support from the music community, more than 30 music and arts organizations have joined the Texas Music Project to support music education. The principal organizations, lead by the Social Marketing Resource Center, include the Texas Music Educators Association, the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Texas Coalition for Quality Arts Education. In a unique non-profit alliance, these groups will work together to define Texas music education needs, create programs, conduct grassroots fundraising initiatives and launch the "Don't Mess With Texas Music" public awareness campaign.

The Texas Commission on the Arts will facilitate the distribution of funding, which will be accessible to Texas schools through grant applications and awarded based on need. It is the intention of the Texas Music Project that grants be used to support the implementation of full-time, rigorous music education curricula.

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“Music education in schools has declined across the country, not just in Texas. But as you might expect from Texans, we are coming together to tackle the problem in some very innovative ways,” said Bruce Orr, co-founder and executive director of the Texas Music Project. “With legislative and corporate support, and the generosity of the Texas music industry, we are working to raise awareness of the need for and the benefits of music education in our schools, both of which can often be overlooked during school budgeting sessions.”

In addition, House Bill 2582, introduced by Representative Elizabeth Ames Jones and signed into law in June by Governor Rick Perry, ensures the Texas Music Project and music education has the long-term support of the state of Texas.

“The Texas Music Project represents a deep sense of Texas pride and an unselfish commitment on the part of the participating organizations and members of the Texas music community,” said Representative Jones. “The signing of House Bill 2582 ensures that the overwhelming commitment the community has made to our youth is also supported by the state of Texas. It is exciting to have played a part of this win-win project.”

The Texas Music Project also will benefit from corporate supporters who share its goal of strengthening music education in Texas. To date sponsors include Starbucks, Dell Computer Corporation, Tom Thumb and Randalls Food Markets, and Brook Mays Music Company, among others. For information on how to get involved, please visit www.texasmusicproject.org

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Lead by the Social Marketing Resource Center, a non-profit organization, the Texas Music Project is a joint, long-term initiative uniting the Texas music industry with the State of Texas, the Texas Music Educators Association, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Texas Coalition for Quality Arts Education. The primary mission of the Texas Music Project is to help strengthen and restore rigorous music education to Texas schools, raise awareness of the positive impact music education has on students and promote the Texas music industry. Texas Music Project creates meaningful music education programs for Texas schools in need, conducts the “Don’t Mess With Texas Music” awareness campaign, and markets unique fundraising products (CDs, merchandise) and events featuring Texas artists, music and performance venues. For more information on the Texas Music Project, visit (www.texasmusicproject.org).