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## **FIRST NIGHT 2010 PLANNING IN FULL SWING;**

### **AGENCY RECOVERS FROM DEVASTATING WEATHER BLOW TO SEE ANOTHER YEAR, BY RESTRUCTURING, RENEGOTIATING, AND CULTIVATING CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

(BOSTON – Oct. 27, 2009) The staff of First Night Boston, the country's oldest and largest New Year's Eve arts festival, is busy planning this year's event, which will feature the same elements of the last 33 First Nights. Last year's event was a major disappointment in terms of attendance, due to an unforgiving snowstorm that caused many revelers to stay home. This caused the agency to fall short of projected revenue, leaving it with a substantial deficit for the year. However, through staff restructuring, vendor negotiation and the cultivation of creative sponsorships and partnerships, First Night 2010 will go on as planned. This year's budget of \$1,170,000 reflects the same level of programming.

First Night Boston 2009 was an artistic success, but the nasty winter storm that brought 6-8 inches of snow, high winds and arctic temperatures negatively impacted attendance. The signature Boston event that draws an estimated million people downtown every Dec. 31, drew about 300,000 people last year. Admission revenue, projected to be \$525,000, fell to \$329,000, leaving the agency with an unmanageable deficit for First Night 2009 unless timely and careful steps were taken.

In March of 2009, the beginning of First Night's 2010 fiscal year, three of five full-time First Night staffers were laid off. Executive Director Geri Guardino continued to work at a greatly reduced salary, and many of the year-round part-time contractors reduced their fees. In May of 2009, two of the three laid off positions were restored, with one being converted into a part-time contract position. (This conversion was planned prior to the layoffs). First Night now has three full-time year-round employees, and five year-round part time and contract positions. In addition to the staff restructuring, Guardino also renegotiated many vendor contracts at substantial savings.

With First Night regaining footing in May 2009, planning for First Night 2010 began. FedEx, which been a First Night sponsor for three years now, returns this year, with a commitment to sponsor the FedEx Family Festival at the Hynes Convention Center.

Frank Ward, who many people will remember as the generous man who saved the First Night 2005 midnight fireworks when they were threatened by budget cuts, has once again done the same. Five years later, his generosity will light up the sky for First Night 2010, thanks to his sponsorship of the Cape Cod Dairy Midnight Fireworks on Boston Harbor.

In addition, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA), will help sponsor one of the beloved First Night Boston ice sculptures on Boston Common. Master carver Steve Rose will recreate one of the MFA's famous 4,000-year-old Egyptian sculptures, the original of which is on view in the family-friendly exhibition, "Secrets of Tomb 10A: Egypt 2000 BC."

In addition to these sponsor relationships, First Night continues to enjoy strong support from many foundations and individuals, as well as generous in-kind sponsorship from The City of Boston and Mayor Thomas M. Menino, The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau, Boston Park Plaza Hotel and Towers, WBZ-TV, and *The Boston Metro*.

Until First Night 2004, First Night enjoyed a presenting sponsorship in the amount of \$250,000. The agency has not been able to secure a sponsorship at that level since that time, though Guardino hopes to be able to entice a new sponsor soon, for what she terms “the best deal in town. While it is a substantial amount of money, it provides a great deal of visibility. The sponsor logo goes on the First Night button, all of our marketing materials,” says Guardino. “It is seen by the estimated million people a year who attend an average First Night, as well as all of the people who watch in on television or see any of our marketing materials.”

First Night Boston 2010 will take place in 35 different indoor and outdoor locations around downtown Boston on Dec. 31, 2009. Buttons, good for admission to all indoor events cost \$18 (children under 4 are free) and will go on sale around Thanksgiving at various retail locations. Buttons are \$15 in advance on line from [www.firstnight.org](http://www.firstnight.org). For more information about First Night, visit [www.firstnight.org](http://www.firstnight.org).

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