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NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT:
Kathy Funke, Director
News & Information Services
812/465-7005
FAX 812/465-1956

USI's Historic Southern Indiana to host NEA workshop on rural community planning in New Harmony in November

Historic Southern Indiana (HSI), a heritage-based regional development program of the University of Southern Indiana, was selected to host a workshop on rural community planning November 12-14, 1998 in New Harmony, Indiana. The workshop, "Your Town: Designing Its Future," sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is designed to increase awareness of the role of planning in rural communities. The NEA, concerned that rural areas of the country rarely have ready access to sources of design assistance or information on the application of design to community problems, have funded workshops across the country. The Indiana site is the 18th workshop held nationally and the first in the Midwest.

Participants from Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin have been chosen to attend the workshop in New Harmony, a small Indiana town known for the two 19th century communal groups (the Harmonists and the Owen/Maclure community) who sought utopia in the wooded hills along the Wabash River. Today, Historic New Harmony, a unified program of the University of Southern Indiana and the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, offers visitors to New Harmony tours of historic properties, theatrical performances, contemporary art exhibitions, special events, and shopping and dining opportunities.

Darrel E. Bigham, director of HSI, said the purpose of the workshop is to introduce the role of design in community planning. He said, "American communities face many critical problems like heavy outmigration and loss of jobs, rapid growth from suburban sprawl, or location of a new business. Such issues affect community vitality. Workshop emphasis will be on problem solving using a hypothetical town with real-world problems. Other partners in the project are Historic New Harmony, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, and Purdue University's Department of Landscape Architecture.

Indiana's First Lady Judy O'Bannon will be the keynote speaker on November 12. Michael P. McLaughlin, coordinator of Millennium and Leadership Initiatives for the NEA, will welcome participants. Other presenters will be Kent Schuette, Jeff Rapson, and Bernie Dahl, Purdue University; Anne Gryczon, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana; Shelley Mastran, rural preservation consultant; Connie Weinzapfel, Historic New Harmony, and Bigham. Leslie Townsend, HSI program coordinator, is coordinator of the workshop.

Session topics include design changes, the design process, natural and cultural resources inventories, getting and managing design assistance, local case studies, and communicating your vision. The National Trust for Historic Preservation and State University of New York (SUNY)-Syracuse originally developed the program.

People to contact for more information:

Shelley Mastran	Phone: 703/734-1742	E-mail: shellmast@aol.com
Leslie Townsend	Phone: 812/465-7013	E-mail: ltownsen.ucs@smtp.usi.edu