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Former Denver Mayor awarded top arts and culture honor

Federico Peña recognized for visionary role in founding of SCFD

(Denver, CO, Oct. 11, 2018) – Former Denver Mayor Federico Peña will receive the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District’s highest honor for his role in championing the initial public vote to form the district in 1988. For nearly 30 years, his leadership has supported arts and culture funding across the seven counties of the Denver Metro area.

Peña served as a powerful spokesperson encouraging voters to support the fledgling effort to fund arts, science and cultural facilities across the Denver Metro area at a time when funding was desperately needed to keep both flagship institutions open as well as help smaller, local organizations survive during a time of serious economic downturn. As Denver mayor, Peña recognized the critical impact these organizations had – not just on quality of life – but also on the economic vitality of the region.

“Mayor Peña understood that his vision for a “Great City” couldn’t be achieved unless arts and culture were a central pillar,” said Deborah Jordy, SCFD Executive Director. “He embraced the campaign to provide funding for these institutions wholeheartedly and helped ensure access for literally millions of people over the last 30 years to the events and experiences that make all our lives richer and our region the kind of place where people want to live.”

The Rex Morgan Award for Lifetime Leadership recognizes an individual who exemplifies leadership, vision and a philosophy of cooperation. Peña will receive the Rex Morgan Award for Lifetime Leadership at the SCFD Community Celebration & Awards, to be held on Wednesday, November 28, 2018 at the McNichols Civic Center Building. The event will commemorate the 30th anniversary of SCFD’s inception. This program is supported by Denver Arts & Venues Cultural Partner Program at the McNichols Civic Center Building. Past winners of the Rex Morgan Award have included community visionaries, cultural champions and organizational leaders such as Victoria Sterling, Floyd Ciruli, Maruca Salazar, and Barry and Arlene Hirschfeld.

Joining former Mayor Peña for honoring will be a leading district volunteer as well as a SCFD-funded organization that has exemplified the use of innovative partnerships and regional cooperation to improve access and experience for all community members regardless of ability.

The Rex Morgan Award for Civic Engagement and Volunteerism will be awarded to Dan Hopkins, spokesperson for former Colorado Gov. Bill Owens and the Colorado Department of Transportation. Hopkins served on the SCFD Board of Directors one term as a governor appointee and two terms as a representative of Arapahoe County. During the most recent district reauthorization effort, Hopkins contributed countless volunteer hours and provided essential leadership as Board Chair that ensured a positive vote for continuing the SCFD for an additional 12 years.

The final category of the 2018 awards recognizes innovative partnership and regional cooperation and goes to the Lone Tree Arts Center. The award recognizes the Lone Tree Arts Center for creatively breaking through barriers to offer unique and inventive programming that benefits all residents of the district and the entire region. An example of the center's innovation is its Sensory Friendly Initiative which breaks down boundaries to access to art and culture for people living with intellectual or developmental disabilities and encouraging other partners to do the same.

First presented in 1998, the three awards are named for Rex Morgan, a leader, volunteer and community advocate who tirelessly pursued a regional vision of cooperation and inclusiveness for the benefit of the public. Mr. Morgan was a pioneer in the creation of SCFD, fostering a thriving cultural community for residents and lobbying the legislature in the 1980s for the implementation of the 0.1% sales and use tax.

About the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District

For the past 30 years, the [Scientific and Cultural Facilities District](#) has been a catalyst for culture across the Denver metro region. With one powerful penny collected from every ten dollars spent in our seven counties, SCFD has provided invaluable financial resources, creating an ecosystem of unparalleled access, invaluable education, and above all, a sense of wonder that comes from experiencing arts, culture, and science.

The diverse organizations funded by SCFD do more than educate and inspire. The nearly 300 cultural institutions that make up the SCFD family contribute more than \$1.8 billion to the regional economy, employ more than 10,000 people, and reach approximately 4 million children each year. During SCFD's 30-year existence, residents have gazed in wonder at artistic revelations, come face-to-face with scientific breakthroughs, and borne witness to an incredible array of cultural milestones. For 30 years, SCFD has secured a place for art, biology, music, zoology, dance, history, nature, botany in the fabric of our lives – ensuring nothing less than **culture for all**.