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For Immediate Release

Wilson, NC to herald local artist in new Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park
New park to spur art revival in downtown area

WILSON, NC, May 28, 2010—North Carolina’s Eastern Region proudly heralds local Wilson County, North Carolina artist, Vollis Simpson, as well as the City of Wilson on their recent partnership to complete the Vollis Simpson Whirligig Park in Downtown Wilson.

A true Wilson County “local,” Vollis Simpson has twenty five years invested in perfecting a craft that began humbly with him fashioning a makeshift washing machine overseas during WWII. Both an engineer and an artist; he crafts exquisite windmills from large pieces and parts of scrap metal that are displayed throughout a “garden” at his Lucama, N.C. home. With many of Simpson’s self-designed and self-built “whirligigs” already gracing museums and homes throughout the country and the world, town leaders in Wilson, N.C. decided it was time to preserve his work and celebrate his talents locally with the addition of the Park bearing his name and featuring his art.

The building of the park will grant the area a sense of heritage and mark the beginning of an art revival of the entire downtown Wilson area. The process will involve Wilson Downtown Properties purchasing over thirty of Vollis Simpson’s custom built and designed windmills—better known locally as “whirligigs”—to be moved directly from his home garden into the park. In addition, more than fifty smaller versions of Simpson’s brightly colored “whirligigs” will be used to adorn a set-aside educational area within the park. To coincide with the building of the park, a short documentary film detailing Simpson’s work and its impact on the greater Wilson community will be produced. Upon completion in 2012, the park will provide a space not only for Simpson’s work to be cherished by generations to come, but an area for the community to hold various events and festivals. The park will serve as fresh inspiration for future programs

through the Wilson Arts Council, as well as a most appealing attraction for visiting tourists and guests. The town Visitor's Bureau hopes to build on the excitement surrounding the annual Whirligig Festival to make the park a mecca of cultural activity.

North Carolina's Eastern Region President John D. Chaffee stated of the new park and its partnership with Vollis Simpson: "It's truly a testament to the talent and skill of people who live right here in Eastern North Carolina, like Mr. Simpson. Knowing that a local park in the city of Wilson has made the decision to preserve this ingenuitive art for future generations or residents and visitors is just another example of what sets Eastern North Carolina apart. Mr. Simpson's creations are an art that we consider part of our heritage in this region; and they should be celebrated."

Vollis Simpson, 91, is a retired engineer and artist residing in Lucama, N.C. Mr. Simpson has gained nationwide and worldwide renown for his creation of "whirligig" windmills made of scrap metal.

Wilson Downtown Properties is a 501(3)(c) corporation founded in Wilson, N.C. to aid in the preservation and restoration of historic properties in the downtown area.

North Carolina's Eastern Region is a 13-county partnership established by the General Assembly to promote economic development in Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson, Lenoir, Pitt, Wayne, Greene, Duplin, Jones, Onslow, Pamlico, Craven and Carteret Counties. The region encompasses almost 7,000 square miles and approximately one million residents. For more information, visit www.nceast.org, or contact Erin Eatman, Director of Marketing, at Eatman@nceast.org.