



May 2, 2023

John F. Whitmore
Park Planning Manager
City of Denton Parks and Recreation Department
John.Whitmore@cityofdenton.com

Re: Request for Letter of Support from the City of Denton for the Tejas Storytelling Association's Application to the Texas Commission on the Arts for an Arts Respond--Cultural District Project Grant for the City of Denton Texas Storytelling Festival

Dear Mr. Whitmore:

The City of Denton Texas Storytelling Festival is a destination event for cultural tourism in North Texas. It is a major storytelling festival in the southwest, and attracts storytellers and story listeners from all over Texas, the nation, and internationally. Since its inception in 1985, it has been produced annually by the Tejas Storytelling Association (TSA). 2024 will be the thirty-ninth consecutive year.

In-person festivals over the years have the direct economic benefit of bringing over 500 registrants to Denton. One 2023 attendee from Oklahoma tracked personal spending over the 4 days of the festival at over \$782, including gas, food, lodging, and incidental purchases. The festival hotel typically reports approximately \$10,000 in room nights annually, while two local restaurants, who cater meal functions benefit directly through registrations, earning approximately \$1,000 per meal. Total festival attendance at all face-to-face events usually numbers approximately 2000. The festival brings people into Denton from the surrounding communities as well to attend the workshops and concerts, the ghost tales and Liars' Contest, Kids' Day, and story swaps. These are college students, families with children and nursing home residents, while non-resident storytellers and retirees make up a larger percentage. The festival also attracts the Deaf community due to the superb sign language interpreters who interpret all concerts.

To be held at the Denton Civic Center on March 7-10, 2024, the City of Denton Texas Storytelling Festival attracts performing artists, teachers, librarians, clergy, attorneys, councilors, and all those who use storytelling in their work. Tejas Storytelling Association is a nonprofit, 501 (c) 3 organization,

Tejas Storytelling Association • P.O. Box 2806 • Denton, TX 76202 • 940-382-7014 • tsa@tejasstorytelling.com

headquartered in Denton, with a world-wide membership of approximately 280. The festival meets the letter and spirit of TSA's mission of fostering storytelling as an oral tradition, a performing art, and an educational tool. Festival evaluations always report that people return year after year. As one virtual participant commented, "After listening to real humans relate real stories, I feel more connected with my community and to myself."

The planned line up of featured storytellers for 2024 will showcase both nationally known and Texas storytellers, representing myriad heritages and styles, thus sure to attract diverse story listeners. 65 storytellers, 85 volunteers, and community partners, who include the City of Denton Parks and Recreation Department, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Denton Benefit League come together annually, with other local business and individual sponsors.

In all ways, the City of Denton Texas Storytelling Festival benefits the Denton community culturally and economically.

TSA seeks assistance with the partial rental cost of the Denton Civic Center for the 2024 festival in the amount of \$7,000, and hopes to apply to the Texas Commission on the Arts through the Cultural District Project grants for this help. We would respectfully request a letter of support from the City of Denton for this application. We would welcome and appreciate the city's assistance with promoting and marketing the festival through its regular tourism efforts. Enclosed are pictures from our 2023 festival which you are most welcome to use for this purpose, and also in your reporting to the Texas Commission on the Arts.

Thank you very much for your help in referring this proposal to the City of Denton for its consideration.

Best regards,

Valerie Kimble

Valerie Kimble
TSA Grants Committee

Cc: David Claunch, TSA President
Dalton Gregory, TSA Treasurer

Enclosures: Photos by Chester Weems, Joel Hill, ASL interpreter & MaryAnn Blue, Emcee of Ghost Tales, Rising Stars concert performers, Workshop attendees

