PRESS RELEASE
Friends of Hilltop Donates $1,066,494 to FOREVER LSU for Hilltop Arboretum Education Facility

Friends of Hilltop, a nonprofit corporation established to maintain and improve the property donated by Emory Smith to LSU in 1981, have contributed in cash and pledges $1,066,494 to the Forever LSU campaign for the construction of an enclosed educational facility at the Arboretum on Highland Rd. The LSU Foundation and Chancellor Mike Martin will recognize Hilltop’s contributions at the Friends’ annual membership meeting to be held at the Arboretum on Tuesday, December 1, 2009 at 12:30pm.

The LSU Hilltop Arboretum is striving to be a nationally-recognized center for the study of plants and landscape design. The 14 acre nature preserve is noted for its collection of over 150 species of plants native to Louisiana, its unique topography, and its reputation as a readily accessible space where people can experience and learn about nature, plants and the Louisiana Landscape. Stewardship of Hilltop is shared by the LSU Reich School of Landscape Architecture and the Friends of Hilltop. Hilltop is an integral part of the School which is using the Arboretum in its research, teaching, and service activities. In addition to maintaining and improving the site, the Friends group is an educational organization with programming offered to the broader community. Over 5000 people participate in Hilltop activities and programs annually, including children of all ages, adults and professionals who earn continuing education credits.

Since 1998, Friends of Hilltop has included in its long range master plan an enclosed facility that will serve as a model of sustainable building practices and environmental stewardship for the citizens of Louisiana. It is important to note that as part of the Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture, this is the first structure at LSU to be registered for LEED certification, and one of the first in Baton Rouge. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is the international benchmark for sustainable building. The new building will serve as an educational tool and as an example to the community. It is part of the original architectural design created by Lake/Flato Architects, including the buildings which now house Hilltop’s administrative offices, library, gift shop, and open-air Margaret Homes Brown pavilion, built in 2000.

Lake/Flato of San Antonio, TX, has won multiple awards, including for Hilltop Arboretum, and is internationally recognized for environmentally responsible design.

The estimated cost of the enclosed pavilion is $1.4MM. With some expenses paid, and funding and pledges of $1,228,253, Friends has $199,936 remaining to raise. The group hopes to complete this phase during the first quarter of 2010 so construction can begin.

For more information about the Friends of Hilltop capital campaign visit www.lsu.edu/hilltop, call 225-767-6916, or donate on line at www.lsufoundation.org.