



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH COLLECTION ON DISPLAY AT SOUTHWEST FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

FORT MYERS, Fla. (Feb. 15, 2010) – The Lee County Port Authority and the Lee County Alliance for the Arts recently installed an exhibit entitled, “Early African-American Pioneers of Lee County” at Southwest Florida International Airport. This exhibition, as part of the airport’s Art in Flight program, will be on display throughout the month of February in recognition of Black History Month. The traveling exhibit, on loan from the Cultural Heritage Center (CHC), complemented with artifacts from the Southwest Florida Museum of History, highlights some of the notable individuals and places in Fort Myers and Sanibel that contributed to the rich legacy of the area and offers a glimpse into the lives of local pioneers from the African American community. The exhibit is located on the 2nd level of the airport terminal, in the West Atrium, inside Door #5.

The collection of images on display span a timeline dating from the Civil War to the early 20th Century and includes: United States Colored Troops from the Civil War, soldiers at Buckingham Field in World War II; the first black settler - Nelson Tillis; household slaves – Aunt Clarie (*Photo courtesy of the Southwest Florida Historical Society*) and her son, Aaron; historic local families – Gavin and Walker; entrepreneurs – Dr. Ella Piper, Mildred Blaylock and Isaac Johnson; educator – James Nixon; athletes – first Dunbar High School football team as well as photographs of area buildings.

The Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) is a nonprofit organization founded by Yvonne Hill in 2007. CHC’s mission is to create cultural learning environments that foster a sense of community, build intercultural understanding of different ethnic groups, and showcase their diverse contributions to the development of Southwest Florida.

The Southwest Florida Museum of History is dedicated to the collection, preservation and interpretation of history and traditions, with particular emphasis on Fort Myers and Southwest Florida.

The Southwest Florida Historical Society’s mission is to discover, collect and preserve original and source documents and photographs pertaining to the history of Southwest Florida.

Art in Flight is a partnership between the Lee County Alliance for the Arts and the Lee County Port Authority, which brings art to public spaces at Southwest Florida International Airport.

Southwest Florida International Airport served more than 7.4 million passengers in 2009 and is one of the top 50 U.S. airports for passenger traffic. No ad valorem (property) taxes are used for airport operation or construction. For more information, log onto www.flylcpa.com.