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**AMERICAN BUS ASSOCIATION NAMES W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL
ONE OF NORTH AMERICA'S 100 BEST EVENTS FOR 2011**

Florence, AL...The American Bus Association (ABA) announced today that the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** to be held July 22-30, 2011, has been designated as one of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2011 by an experienced expert tourism industry selection committee. Inclusion in the Top 100 list, published as a supplement to the September/October issue of *Destinations* magazine, indicates that the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** offers excellent entertainment value to both tour groups and individual travelers from around the world, according to ABA.

With the release of the American Bus Association's 2011 Top 100 Events in North America, ABA celebrates 29 years of the program. What began as a way for motorcoach operators to incorporate new product into their itineraries has grown to one of the most sought-after lists by travel professionals, motorcoach operators and the general public.

"The attractiveness of the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** as a don't-miss entertainment value is only part of why its selection this year is such a distinction for The Shoals," said Peter J. Pantuso, CTIS, ABA's president and CEO. "The real news here is that the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** has been recognized as a potential magnet for tourism dollars, at a time when reenergizing domestic tourism is so important to our spirit and our economy. The honor gives The Shoals an important boost in visibility among professional tour planners."

According to studies completed by researchers at The George Washington University and Dunham and Associates, one overnight visit by a motorcoach group can leave from \$5,000 to more than \$13,000 in a local destination's economy. Those dollars are spent on lodging, meals, admissions, fees, shopping, souvenirs, services and local taxes.

"Motorcoach groups spend more and stay longer," Pantuso said. "That's why the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** is truly a local economic asset. There is no better way to jump-start tourism than to attract motorcoach groups to a great event and convince them to extend their stay."

ABA's 2011 Top 100 Events Selection Committee chose the **W.C. Handy Music Festival** from among a record number of more than 650 event nominations submitted by ABA members. Judges considered the event's broad appeal, its accessibility to motorcoaches and skill at handling large groups, and a variety of other relevant criteria.

The Top 100 Events list is available online at www.buses.org/top100. For more information on the **W.C. Handy Music Festival**, please see our website at www.wchandymusicfestival.org.

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