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YEAR ROUND MARDI GRAS FAMILY FUN

New Orleans, LA – More than 100 years ago, the first Mardi Gras Parade rode down St. Charles Avenue, and since that time the festival has grown into a world event. There are many family activities, however, surrounding Mardi Gras that occur throughout the year.

“For New Orleanians, Mardi Gras is a great family event, something that is celebrated each year with all generations participating,” said Sandra S. Shilstone, President and CEO of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. “Families attend all the parades in Uptown, Mid-City and downtown and make these events part of their rituals.”

Families enjoy Mardi Gras year round due to the many exhibits open in the area. These exhibits offer an excellent opportunity for visitors to entertain and educate their families about this famous annual celebration.

Mardi Gras: It's Carnival Time in Louisiana is located at the Louisiana State Museum's Presbytere on Jackson Square in the historic French Quarter. This must-see exhibition features two floors of high-tech, interactive displays and traces the history, glamour and fun of Mardi Gras as it is celebrated throughout the state. There are also permanent exhibits of exquisite ball gowns and jewels, an interactive climb-aboard float recreation, Mardi Gras Indian costumes, an Acadian Carnival gallery, and much more.

Also located in the French Quarter, and open all year during restaurant hours, is the Germaine Cazenave Wells Mardi Gras Museum, located on the second floor of Arnaud's Restaurant at 813 Rue Bienville. Here the visitor will find a dazzling collection of Mardi Gras ball gowns, costumes and memorabilia that provide a glimpse into the glamour of the season.

When the Casbarian family bought Arnaud's in the 1970's, 26 gowns and costumes from the Cazenave family were found packed away. The Casbarians felt they needed to be shared with the public so they encased them in glass, added historical information about each, and now invite visitors to learn about the social aspects of Mardi Gras that normally is not shared with the public.

Just across the Mississippi River is Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World, home of the largest float builder in the world. Here families will see floats being created and designed. Blaine Kern is affectionately called “Mr. Mardi Gras” by locals and has been in the forefront of float design and construction worldwide. His facility offers visitors a birds-eye view of the intricacies and detail in building floats. More than 80% of the floats that travel down New Orleans streets, and many floats that decorate parades worldwide, are made at Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World.

While actual Mardi Gras festivities take place for about two weeks, families can get a feeling for Mardi Gras year-round by touring the various exhibits available. To learn more about the history, pageantry, and activities surrounding Mardi Gras in New Orleans, visit www.NewOrleansOnline.com, the official tourism website for the city of New Orleans, where visitors can also order a free copy of the *Official New Orleans Tourism Guide*, containing money saving coupons to hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation promotes the city as a leisure tourism destination throughout the year. Annually, NOTMC's marketing campaigns include strategic print, broadcast, and Internet advertising and public relations. Web sites: www.NewOrleansOnline.com; www.NewOrleansMuseums.com; www.HearNewOrleansMusic.com.

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