

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mardi Gras Comes to Charlotte

Queen City's first ever Mardi Gras Parade will benefit Beads for Needs

Charlotte, NC (January 5, 2011) – New Orleans, St. Louis and Tampa have hosted larger than life Mardi Gras events for years and now Charlotte is getting it's very own Mardi Gras celebration. EpiCentre, Charlotte's premier entertainment venue, and Beads for Needs, a Charlotte landmark in charitable events benefiting children's charities, are partnering to bring the Queen City its first ever Mardi Gras parade and celebration – Parade of Beads – to, in part, benefit Speedway Children's Charities and the Charlotte Jaycees.

EpiCentre will be transformed into the French Quarter with New Orleans-style decorations the entire week of Mardi Gras, culminating with the Parade of Beads on Friday, February 17 at 9 p.m. The EpiCentre courtyard will be filled with bands, a DJ, mascots and cheerleaders during the parade, and spectators can line up on the three levels of the EpiCentre balconies to catch beads, cups and other parade throws. The parade will provide an opportunity for all local groups, businesses and charities to showcase themselves. The event will include street performers, traditional Mardi Gras King Cake and Hurricanes, one of New Orleans' most popular drinks. Local groups interested in a spot in one of the parade "krewes" can contact Danny Landry at dlandry@fhp-usa.com.

"Mardi Gras is just one of the many traditions that have contributed to the romance and lore of New Orleans," said Shelia Fletcher, Partner of Pavilion at EpiCentre. "EpiCentre is excited to host Charlotte's first-ever Mardi Gras celebration, bringing a taste of the Big Easy to the heart of our city."

As part of the celebration, Whisky River will host the annual Beads for Needs charity event on February 17 at 7 p.m. to, in part, benefit Speedway Children's Charities. The VIP event, featuring live entertainment, an open wine and beer bar and Mardi Gras décor, will kick off the Mardi Gras celebration prior to the parade, with the party eventually moving to the EpiCentre courtyard and other venues in the uptown entertainment destination.

Tickets for the Beads for Needs VIP charity event at Whisky River are \$35 apiece and available at Whisky River, 210 E Trade Street in uptown Charlotte, or online at WhiskyRiverCharlotte.com, BeadsforNeeds.org and EpiCentreNC.com/paradeofbeads.

"Beads for Needs has been a landmark event in Charlotte's philanthropic community over the last decade," stated Fred Baiz, President of Beads for Needs. "We have survived through these challenging economic times and are absolutely thrilled to partner with EpiCentre to once again grow this event and our ability to help children in need right here in the Queen City."

Beads for Needs is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit entity. The mission of Beads for Needs is to contribute to the intellectual, social and psychological development of underprivileged children in the Charlotte community by raising funds and awareness for nonprofits that provide positive developmental opportunities through effective programs and initiatives. Additional information is available at BeadsForNeeds.org.

What: Parade of Beads – a Mardi Gras Celebration benefiting Beads for Needs

When: Friday, February 17th, 7 p.m. until 12 a.m.

Where: Parade of Beads at EpiCentre, Beads for Needs at Whisky River

Parade of Beads Event Highlights

- French Quarter décor throughout the EpiCentre
- Live Music (Bands and DJ)
- Mascots and dance teams
- Hurricane Stations/ King Cakes
- Beads
- Mardi Gras Parade at 9 p.m. with local social groups, alumni groups, sponsors and beads for needs goers
- To get you or your group a spot in one of the parade “krewes” email dlandry@fhp-usa.com

Beads for Needs Kickoff Event at Whisky River Event Highlights

- Live entertainment
- Open wine and beer bar
- Mardi Gras décor and beads
- Tickets are \$35 apiece and available at Whisky River or online at WhiskyRiverCharlotte.com, BeadsforNeeds.org and EpiCentreNC.com/paradeofbeads.

Owned by NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Whisky River is one of Charlotte, North Carolina’s most popular evening entertainment venues in the heart of the vibrant uptown scene at the EpiCentre. With its unpretentious charm and electrifying blend of live music performances, celebrity guests and dynamic DJs spinning everything from rock to country and more, Whisky River is the ideal destination for casual, feel-good fun. So grab your friends and get ready for a revved-up time at Charlotte’s favorite place to unwind – Whisky River. Oh, and don’t forget to take a ride on the famous, and always entertaining, mechanical bull – if you dare!

EpiCentre is the Southeast’s hub for dining, entertainment, recreation, nightlife and hospitality. Featuring an innovative design and accommodating layout, EpiCentre is home to over three dozen unique concepts encompassing over half a million square feet. The restaurants, shops and nightspots at EpiCentre are perfectly situated around an open air pavilion offering dramatic views of the Charlotte skyline. Located at the intersection of Trade and College Streets, EpiCentre is in the heart of vibrant uptown Charlotte, just blocks away from prominent businesses and venues such as Bank of America Corporate Center, Time Warner Cable Arena, Charlotte Convention Center and the new NASCAR Hall of Fame and Museum. Best of all, EpiCentre is easily accessible from anywhere, including a convenient stop on the LYNX Blue Line.



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