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SANTA MARIA'S "TOWN CENTER GALLERY" ENJOYS NEW LOCATION AND CONTINUED ROLE AS VITAL OUTLET FOR AREA ARTISTS

SANTA MARIA, CA— Like so many non-profit organizations these days, Santa Maria's Town Center Gallery has had to fight to survive, especially when it was faced with an unplanned location change last year. But thanks to the commitment and caliber of its artists, managers and supporters, this cooperative art gallery is flourishing in a new location in downtown Santa Maria. Previously located in the Town Center Mall – East, the gallery is now settled at 321 Town Center West, # B-6 in what was the original location of the Discovery Museum.

"Since first opening its doors in 1984, this gallery has consistently provided a place where artists of many backgrounds from the Santa Maria Valley can exhibit their artistry for the enrichment of the entire community," says Sharon Foster, president of the Town Center Gallery. "While cities north and south of us are better known for their galleries, our hope is that people will visit us and see the talent that the greater Santa Maria region has to offer. They also may be surprised at the affordability of some of the pieces."

Indeed, locals and visitors alike, who want to take home a piece of original art commemorating the beauty of the Central Coast may choose from an abundance of works at the Town Center Gallery. Vineyards, coastline, rolling hills and agriculture are just some of the local subjects depicted in a range of media by Central Coast artists, some of whom are nationally renowned. The gallery also maintains a satellite location of rotating exhibits at the Santa Maria Public Airport. Here, travelers waiting for a flight can enjoy scenes of the Central Coast and even purchase art as a souvenir.

The Town Center Gallery offers a range of media from pottery, paintings and textiles to handmade greeting cards and decoupage eggs. Pastels, photography, sculpture, jewelry, mosaic pieces and 3-D art are also a regular part of the mix.

The gallery is particularly proud of its scholarships and art classes that it provides for all ages, and the fact that visitors often enjoy personally meeting the artists, some of whom work during gallery hours Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Some of the gallery's widely known artists include William Shinn (ceramics), Sandra Kay Johnson (watercolors and silk paintings) and Jerry Stinn (jewelry). Hattie Stoddard, a local artist and the gallery's director, is also renowned for her multi-media pieces depicting Central Coast locations and children. One of her creations hangs in the Sacramento office of Lt. Governor Abel Maldonado, who purchased the piece at an auction.

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"With so many art galleries closing their doors in our unstable economy," adds Foster, "this gallery stands out as a consistently reliable establishment for exhibiting and dealing in art works." She explains that this stability is vital in order to make the gallery attractive and profitable for artists. Says Foster, "Every time I walk into the Town Center Gallery, I see the work of hands that live to create, and I see a place where our community can share in this love of art."

The Town Center Gallery is located at 321 Town Center West, # B-6 in Santa Maria. The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 pm. For more information, please visit www.thetowncentergallery.com or phone (805) 349-7303. The Town Center Gallery's mission is to encourage fine arts in the Santa Maria Valley through education, awareness and scholarships.

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