

**The Gordon Parks Center for Culture and Diversity
Fort Scott Community College**

News Release

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IDA MCBETH to perform at 5th annual Gordon Parks Celebration

Fort Scott– Blues and Jazz singer Ida McBeth will perform at the 5th annual Gordon Parks Celebration on Thursday, October 2 as the featured performer at the "Rhythm and Ribs at the Liberty" event. The event at the Liberty Theatre in downtown Fort Scott will feature a dinner of ribs and sides followed by McBeth's concert. Tickets for the event will be \$20 and will go on sale September 15.

According to the New York Times, McBeth is "...an electrifying blues and jazz singer. Ida McBeth knows how to move an audience, driving it to stomp and dance with a saucy rhythm and blues number, or quieting everyone down with a soft jazz ballad. Her sound is both gutsy and modern."

Ida's musical style is so unique that it is hard to classify. Over the years, her repertoire has included pop-style ballads, jazz and blues, show tunes, funk, R&B, gospel and well-known standards. Critics have described her as "a jazz singer," "a blues singer," "a pop singer" and "a cabaret singer." Still others have referred to her as "a story teller," "a professor emeritus of body language," "a consummate actress" and "the complete entertainer." A song stylist is the title Ida prefers.

By the age of five, Ida McBeth knew she wanted to be a singer. Born in Kansas City, Kansas, Ida was provided early exposure to a variety of talented vocalists by her mother. These singers included such greats as Nancy Wilson, Arthur Prysock, Nat King Cole, Bill Withers, Gladys Knight and Sarah Vaughan.

As a child, Ida took an active part in the music program of her church along with school choirs and dance bands. Her professional singing career began at the age of 16. After graduating from high school, however, Ida was undecided about a career in music, so she enrolled at Kansas University to study for her nursing credentials.

In 1972, Ida's desire to be a singer outweighed any previous doubts about a career as a musician. She followed her aspirations and left college to join Dick Halligan ("Blood, Sweat & Tears") and soon recorded her first album in Los Angeles. Ida moved to California in 1973, allotting herself six months to attain her goals. Within four weeks of her arrival, she was booked to sing six nights a week at a nightclub in Bel Air.

Over the years, Ida McBeth has received many honors and awards. In 1984, she was named by the Kansas City-based International Jazz Hall of Fame as both "Best Female Jazz Vocalist" and "Entertainer of the Year." In 1990 Kansas City Mayor Richard Berkeley awarded her a special proclamation designating April 27, 1990 as "Ida McBeth's 20th Anniversary Day." And also in 1990, Ida was named as one of Kansas City's "People of the Year" by Ingram's Magazine. Most recently, Ida's outstanding achievements have included performing the national anthem for the presidential nomination of Al Gore at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, Kansas City's birthday bash at Arrowhead Stadium with Kenny Rodgers and Walter Cronkite, as

well as performing at the Smithsonian Institute in 2001. Ida was Crowned Queen of the Kansas City, Kansas Blues Street Festival for 2005 and given the key to the city. And she was voted "Best of R&B / Soul" in the Pitch Readers Poll for both 2004 and 2005.

Never one to rest on her laurels, Ida McBeth gives much of her time and talent to various charities and community services. She has worked with the American Cancer Society, the Nova Center for autistic children, and the Stop Violence Coalition, and the American Diabetes Association to name but a few. In addition to her performance and charity work, Ida is also the mother of one son, Jason, who was diagnosed with autism, at birth, 22 years ago.

Today, some 30 years and five albums later, the critics still laud the talents of Ida McBeth. The New York Times applauded her "technique, taste and sass... her precise intuition, guts and raw confidence." And Ida's lithesome vocals continue to embrace the subtleties of jazz, pop, blues and soul, both in her home base of Kansas City and on the road.

The Celebration schedule is available on the Center's website www.gordonparkscenter.org. Tickets for Gordon Parks Celebration events will go on sale September 15 and will be available at the Gordon Parks Center at FSCC and at The Country Cupboard, 12 N. Main, in downtown Fort Scott. For more information or to help with the Celebration events contact the Center at 223-2700, ext. 515 or see the website at gordonparkscenter.org.

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