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THOMASVILLE PHILANTHROPIST MARGUERITE NEEL WILLIAMS RECEIVES THE HIGHEST HONOR TO BE CONFERRED UPON GEORGIANS

Savannah, GA—December 19, 2008. The Office of the Governor and the Georgia Historical Society to posthumously name Marguerite Neel Williams a Georgia Trustee in Savannah on **Saturday, February 14, 2009 at 7:00 pm.** Williams and philanthropist Bernard Marcus of Atlanta will be the first Georgians in 260 years to receive this honor, which recognizes their profound commitment to philanthropy and service in their communities and throughout the state.

Marguerite Neel Williams' advocacy for historic preservation ensured the survival of many landmarks throughout the state, and her civic activism created a safe space for the children of Thomasville. Throughout her life she provided leadership for civic, political, and educational organizations throughout Georgia.

The Governor's Office, in partnership with the Georgia Historical Society, has reconstituted the Georgia Trustees, a governing body originally chartered and appointed by His Majesty King George II of England in 1732 to establish a new colony in North America. The original Georgia Trustees founded the Georgia colony upon the principle of *Non Sibi, Sed Aliis*, "Not for Self but for Others" and through their vision and philanthropy they established and governed the colony until their disbandment in 1752 when Georgia became a royal colony. Each year, the Governor will annually appoint new Trustees whose history-making accomplishments and service reflect the original Trustees' ideals.

The names of the new Trustees will be placed on the roll with the original Trustees from 1732 and they will be inducted by the Governor at the Georgia Historical Society's annual *Georgia Days* Birthday Bash and Awards Gala in Savannah on the site of the founding of the Colony of Georgia. This highly-anticipated event will take place on the Riverfront in Downtown Savannah, at the Hyatt Regency, and will include dinner, dancing, and a keynote address featuring Washington political insiders **James Carville** and **Mary Matalin**. The Gala will conclude two weeks of educational events designed to bring history to life for Georgia's schoolchildren.

Marguerite Neel Williams (1917 – 1999) was a tireless, lifetime supporter of history, historic preservation, and education in Georgia. She was a member of Thomasville Landmarks and founded several groups dedicated to preservation, including the Thomasville Genealogical History and Fine Arts Library, the Thomasville Cultural Center, and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. She was a member of the Board of Curators of the Georgia Historical Society and was instrumental in helping that institution to grow its capacity. Known for her engagement in local, state, and national politics, Mrs. Williams served on the State Commission for the Preservation of the Capitol and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In her hometown of Thomasville, she was instrumental in the restoration and preservation of the Thomasville Cultural Center, the Neel House, and All Saints Episcopal Church. A passionate advocate for education and the arts, Mrs. Williams served as a member of the University of Georgia President's Club and

the Florida State University Foundation and as an advisor for the Georgia Business Committee for the Arts, the Georgia Fine Arts Academy, and the Fine Arts Committee for the U.S. State Department. Her civic activism further included the founding of the Community Foundation of Southwest Georgia and the Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Thomas County, which bears her name. Mrs. Williams has been recognized on numerous occasions for her achievements, including having received the Crownshield Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the University of Georgia Arch Friendship Award, CARE International Humanitarian Award (1991), and being named "Woman of the Year" by the Thomasville-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce (1976). Mrs. Williams died in the spring of 1999.

For more information about the Georgia Trustees, *Georgia Days*, or the GHS Birthday Bash and Annual Awards Gala, please visit www.georgiahistory.com or call 912.651.2125.

The Georgia Historical Society, headquartered in Savannah, is the oldest cultural institution in the state and one of the oldest historical organizations in the nation. It is the first and only statewide historical society in Georgia. For nearly 175 years, GHS has collected, preserved, and shared Georgia history through a variety of educational outreach programs, publications, and research services. For more information visit:
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