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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAMA PREPARES FOR “THRILLING” GARDEN PARTY

Ligonier – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Ligonier Valley will host its thirteenth annual Garden Party, “The Thrill of the Hunt for Art,” on Saturday, May 31. Live music, elegant cuisine, silent and live auctions and several hunt-themed activities will combine to make this one of the Museum’s most memorable Garden Party events. Co-chairing the Garden Party is Gretchen and Joseph Griffith of Laughlintown and Barbara and Gene Kravits of Ligonier. Serving as honorary chairs are Rolling Rock Masters of the Hunt, Christina Henderson, Sophie Mellon and Fritz Teroerde.

Upon arrival at the Museum, guests will be greeted by members of the Rolling Rock Hunt Pony Club. Inside the gallery, the featured exhibition will be *Scrap Redefined: Works by Mei Greer and Ronald Nigro*, with both artists in attendance to greet guests and discuss their works on view. Live music will be provided by the Rick Purcell Band featuring Shari Richards. The group plays hits from the 1930s through present day and has performed at receptions, parties and affairs throughout the Pittsburgh region. During the program, the Museum and the Ligonier Valley Auxiliary will honor two long-time Auxiliary members and SAMA supporters, Madelon Sheedy and Helen Thorne.

According to Gene Kravits, this year’s Garden Party will be “the premier event that’s been held at the Ligonier Museum.” A variety of fox hunt-related events will add to the evening’s ambience. Among the highlights will be the Running of the Hounds, in which Rolling Rock’s Master of the Hounds will present a demonstration of the perfectly trained hounds. Guests also will have an opportunity to interact with the horses and hounds.

Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres will be provided by Vallozzi’s Restaurant in Greensburg. This year’s event will include a seated dinner featuring cuisine by chefs Josiah Henry and Gina Mrdjenovich and dessert by pastry chef David Piquard. Henry, Executive Chef at Vallozzi’s in Pittsburgh, will prepare salad and appetizers. He studied at the Culinary School of Baltimore International College and has previously worked as Chef de Cuisine at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort & Spa and Executive Chef at Red Star

Brewery and Grille in Greensburg. Passed hors d'oeuvres and the main entrée will be prepared by Mrdjenovich, Executive Chef at Vallozzi's Greensburg restaurant for thirty-five years. Under her direction, Vallozzi's became one of just 500 fine dining establishments in North America to receive the "Distinguished Restaurants of North America" award. Delectable desserts will be provided by Piquard, a master pastry chef hailing from Metz in the Alsace-Lorraine region of France. He left an award-winning career in France to become a pioneer of French patisserie in Pittsburgh, first at Paris 66 and now as head of the Gaby et Jules kitchen.

The Garden Party will also provide splendid shopping opportunities in the live and silent auctions. Up for bidding will be a variety of artwork, jewelry, golf packages and luxury items. This year, the Museum is offering special "Purchase Now" pricing on certain items, such as a children's party for twenty with games, art project, pizza, dessert and beverages included. Another "Purchase Now" item is a brunch for up to twenty guests with re-enactor Bill Choby, who will share stories of life in Colonial Virginia. For more information on how to "Purchase Now," please call the Museum at (724) 238-6015.

"This year's Garden Party is sure to be exciting and full of surprises," said SAMA-Ligonier Valley Coordinator Sommer Toffle. "Our chairs have been working tirelessly to ensure a fabulous night. The event is a wonderful way for guests to support the Museum while also having an opportunity to meet our exhibiting artists and help us honor our two distinguished Auxiliary members, Madelon Sheedy and Helen Thorne."

The Garden Party begins at 5 p.m. on May 31. The event is open to the public, but reservations must be made by May 21. Cost is \$125 per person. For reservations or additional information, please call the Museum or visit www.sama-art.org.

Since its opening in 1976, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art has been devoted to its mission of collecting and exhibiting 19th and 20th century American art to the rural communities of Southwestern and Central Pennsylvania. Since that time, the Museum's permanent collection has grown to number more than 4,000 works of art. With four sites located in Altoona, Johnstown, Ligonier and Loretto, SAMA is able to reach tens of thousands every year with its world-class exhibitions and award-winning education programs. Each of SAMA's four sites is open to the public free of charge.