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**THE SILK ROAD OASIS: GOOD THINGS HAPPEN
WHEN STRANGERS MEET**

**Renowned Cellist Yo-Yo Ma's Vision of Cultural Haven Comes to Life
Grand Opening June 1**

May 2, 2006, Chicago, IL – The Silk Road Oasis opens June 1 in the heart of downtown Chicago as the headquarters for *Silk Road Chicago: Summer 2006*. *Silk Road Chicago*, a citywide celebration inspired by the historic Silk Road and noted cellist Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project. Located at 72 E. Randolph Street, the Silk Road Oasis is based on Ma's vision of a haven in the middle of the city for Chicagoans and visitors to gather and experience the cultural and artistic legacies of the Silk Road, the ancient network of trade routes that connected the people and traditions of Asia with those of Europe. Featuring an exhibition, artists' demonstrations, performances, and special events, the Oasis complements the over 250 *Silk Road Chicago* Summer programs developed by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs with more than 70 cultural and community partners throughout the city.

“The Silk Road Oasis has been a dream of mine because I believe that good things happen when strangers meet,” said Ma, artistic director, the Silk Road Project. “The Oasis provides a natural setting for us to celebrate the many cultures and traditions of the world.”

On Thursday, June 1, the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Office of Tourism are inviting Chicagoans and visitors to join them in celebrating the opening the Silk Road Oasis. From noon to 2 p.m., the Silk Road Oasis will be the site of live music, demonstrations, giveaways and more.

The Oasis will feature performances by musicians, storytellers, and theater artists who share their inspirations with the audience. On Friday evenings beginning June 2, concerts and performances are offered from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. Artist demonstrations and family workshops will take place Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Guests can watch as Chicago printmaker Steve Walters creates and produces a poster series commissioned for *Silk Road Chicago* including a weekly lunchtime poster demonstration and a twice-monthly screen-printing workshop. Fully equipped with wi-fi, the Oasis is home to a library and reference center complete with historic Silk Road information and books exploring the many cultures of the world.

Among the upcoming programs at the Oasis are a Japanese pottery demonstration and activity with Lillstreet Art Center; a weaving and silk painting demonstration with members of the Illinois Artisans Program; a travel journal-making workshop, led by staff of the Chicago Children's Museum; and tea brewing demonstrations and tastings by Argo Tea, featuring its special Silk Road Tea Blends. Performances by The Mosaic Trio, Kokyo Taiko, The Maxwell Street Foundation, and others are also scheduled throughout the summer.

Silk Road Chicago: Summer 2006 is a part of the yearlong showcase, *Silk Road Chicago*, presented in partnership with the Silk Road Project founded by Ma, the City of Chicago, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. *Silk Road Chicago: Summer 2006* offers an array of cultural events and activities, family attractions and hospitality packages.

Beginning in late May, travelers can book hotel accommodations and receive detailed information about all of the *Silk Road Chicago: Summer 2006* events and activities, including travel packages, Immersion Weekends, by calling toll free, 1.877.CHICAGO (1.877.244.2246) or visiting <http://www.silkroadchicago.org>. For those calling from outside the United States, Mexico and Canada, please call 1.312.201.8847. The TTY toll-free number for the hearing impaired is 1.866.710.0294. Chicago tourism information is also available on the Internet at <http://www.cityofchicago.org/ExploringChicago>.

Information is also available at Silk Road Oasis (Chicago Tourism Center, 72 E. Randolph Street), Silk Road Chicago's headquarters. The Oasis also features an exhibition and free public programs.

Silk Road Chicago continues in the fall through 2007 with programming offered by the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, including the residency of The Silk Road Ensemble at both institutions, April 9-21, 2007.

Silk Road Chicago: Summer 2006 is also supported by the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, the Mayor's Office of Special Events, and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism, with American Express as an official partner..