



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **MERLEFEST 2011, PRESENTED BY LOWE'S, A ROUSING SUCCESS**

WILKESBORO, N.C. (May 1, 2011)—**MerleFest 2011**, presented by Lowe's, has now come to a close for another year. Initial figures show that, from its start on Thursday, April 28 to its close on Sunday, May 1, aggregate participation over the festival's four days' celebration of "traditional plus" music exceeded 80,000, slightly more than last year. MerleFest, held on the campus of Wilkes Community College, is the primary fund-raiser for the college and funds scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

Four days of beautiful weather, as well as a diverse and fully loaded schedule of artists, were key factors in keeping attendance high. For the second year in a row, first-day festival attendance (Thursday, April 28) was the highest in MerleFest history. Additionally, second-day (Friday, April 29) attendance this year appears to have been the second highest in the festival's 24 year history. Saturday and Sunday's numbers are expected to rank in the festival's top five for their respective days, as well.

"What a great weekend!" exclaimed festival director Ted Hagaman. "With over 90 artists playing on 14 stages, representing everything from bluegrass and blues, to gospel, country and Americana, we feel that we succeeded again in giving our festival guests a great value for their entertainment dollars. We deeply appreciate the support of the great folks of Wilkes County, everyone who works here at the college, and of course our volunteers and fans, for making this all possible."

"I'm always so pleased to see how respectful, friendly and courteous the festival attendees are - MerleFest fans have no equal!" added Hagaman. "It is our hope that everyone who comes to MerleFest has a one-of-a-kind experience."

Performers who turned in riveting performances at MerleFest 2011 include Doc and Richard Watson, Randy Travis, The Doobie Brothers, Lyle Lovett, Zac Brown Band, Robert Plant and

<MORE>

Band of Joy, John Hartford String Band, Nashville Bluegrass Band, Tim O'Brien, Sam Bush, Tony Rice, Peter Rowan, Cadillac Sky, Balsam Range, Sarah Jarosz, Crooked Still, Sonny Landreth, Jerry Douglas featuring Omar Hakim and Viktor Krauss, Alison Brown Quartet with Stuart Duncan, Del McCoury Band, Tut Taylor, Scythian, The Emmitt-Nershi Band, The Wailin' Jennys, Roy Book Binder, The Kruger Brothers and many more.

The highly anticipated Hillside Album Hour on Saturday evening, hosted by The Waybacks with special guest Joan Osborne, featured the classic Allman Brothers' album *Eat A Peach*. A record-setting crowd - estimated at 5,000 fans - filled the hillside to find out the album that would be featured, which is always a closely held secret until the show begins.

The legendary Doc Watson performed throughout the weekend including the memorable "Docabilly" set, featuring Doc and friends applying their style to classic pop tunes. The fan-favorite "My Friend Merle" set included friends of Doc's late son Merle sharing special memories between their favorite songs.

The Midnight Jam on Saturday, hosted by Casey Driessen and the Colorfools, featured Zac Brown, Jim Lauderdale, The Infamous Stringdusters and many other surprises for audience members who stayed up late to enjoy the Jam. Festival performer The InterACTIVE Theater of Jef, a mime and movement theater artist, entertained the late-night crowd between sets - with Casey joining in the juggling!

In addition to promoting "traditional-plus" music, a term coined by Doc Watson to describe the wide variety of musical genres and styles celebrated at MerleFest, the festival also featured heritage crafts demonstrations, instrument picking lessons and jam sessions, dancing, instrument contests, music education workshops, and the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest.

The Shoppes at MerleFest, located in the center of the festival grounds, was a popular area filled with merchandise vendors, the official MerleFest Gift Shop, concessions, and valuable services including an information tent, lost and found, overnight storage, and more. There was also an R&R tent for festival-goers who needed to take a break and escape the heat.

MerleFest is known for its warm, inviting family atmosphere. A key part of that effort is the Little Pickers area, sponsored by Charlotte and Greensboro area BURGER KING Restaurants®. Designed with kids in mind, the area offers activities and crafts to enhance children's experiences at MerleFest - including their own chance to perform at the MerleFest Youth Showcase. Also, children 12 years of age and younger were admitted free to the festival when accompanied by an adult with paid admission.

A significant part of MerleFest's mission is to give back to the community. In that spirit, the outreach program took place on Thursday, with more than 20 of the artists at MerleFest giving performances at local schools. In addition, on Friday morning over 3,200 school children from Wilkes and surrounding counties were invited to attend the festival and flooded the event ground.

<MORE>

Volunteers are integral to the success of MerleFest. Over 600 individual volunteers, 150 volunteer stagehands, and over 70 volunteer groups, including college and community organizations, helped to make the festival a success. Also, each food vendor at MerleFest supports a local non-profit, with proceeds going to further their work and mission. "Quite simply, MerleFest would not be possible without the support of our 4,000+ volunteers," says festival director Ted Hagaman. "Some of these individuals and organizations have given of their time since the festival began, and we are so grateful to them."

MerleFest 2011 is presented by Lowe's. MerleFest is grateful to 75+ sponsors for their support in making the event possible, including: Window World, Cutter, Charlotte and Greensboro area Burger King restaurants, G&B Energy, Pepsi, Ray's Weather, Tyson, Classic Country 98.1 WBRF, Wilkesboro Tourism Development Authority, Winston-Salem Journal, Rock 92 WKRR, WNC Magazine, WNCW 88.7 Public Radio, 98.7 Simon WSMW, 104.1 WTQR, WXII Digital Media, and Yes! Weekly. A complete listing of all MerleFest sponsors and additional information about all aspects of the festival can be found at <http://www.merlefest.org>

Please join us for next year for MerleFest 25: April 26–29, 2012.

###

PHOTOS:



Caption: Doc Watson (left) chatting with Randy Travis (right) before Travis' performance Thursday night. (Photo by Sherry Dancy)

<MORE>



Caption: MerleFest performer Lyle Lovett at the festival press conference (Photo by Denise Clay)



Caption: The record-setting crowd at "Hillside Album Hour" (Photo by Dr. Gordon Burns)

For high-res. versions of the photos above, please contact Sherry Dancy:  
[sherry.dancy@wilkescc.edu](mailto:sherry.dancy@wilkescc.edu).

To see other MerleFest 2011 photos available for use, go to:  
<http://www.merlefest.org/Gallery/gallery.asp>

###

**MerleFest Media Contacts:**

Judy McDonough, Publicist: 615-243-5994 or [mcdonoughmedia1@yahoo.com](mailto:mcdonoughmedia1@yahoo.com)

Amber Herman, WCC Public Information and Relations Officer: 336-838-6292 or  
[amber.herman@wilkescc.edu](mailto:amber.herman@wilkescc.edu)