

*Wilkes Community College's*



**MerleFest**®

**Music. Moments. Memories.**™

ON THE CAMPUS OF WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILKESBORO, NC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHRIS AUSTIN SONGWRITING CONTEST**  
**ACCEPTING ONLINE ENTRIES THROUGH SONICBIDS BEGINNING AUGUST 1**

**Early entry discount price of \$25 for all CASC entries during the month of August**

WILKESBORO, N.C. (July 31, 2012)—**MerleFest**, presented by Lowe's, is proud once again to host the **Chris Austin Songwriting Contest**. Beginning August 1, aspiring songwriters may submit entries to the contest through Sonicbids: <http://www.sonicbids.com/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest>. Early birds take note: during the month of August, all Sonicbids entries for the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest (CASC) will receive an **early entry discount** price of \$25 per entry.

Mail-in entries for CASC will be accepted beginning November 1, 2012, and will close on February 19, 2013.

Now in its 21st year, the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest is an extraordinary opportunity for aspiring writers to have their original songs heard and judged by a panel of Nashville music industry professionals, under the direction of this year's volunteer contest chairperson, Grammy®-winning singer/songwriter **Jim Lauderdale**. MerleFest takes place from **April 25-28, 2013**.

The first round of the CASC competition takes place in Nashville, Tenn., and is narrowed down to 12 finalists representing four categories: bluegrass, country, general and gospel/inspirational. Finalists are then invited to the final round of the competition, which takes place during MerleFest on the campus of Wilkes Community College.

Net proceeds from the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest support the **Wilkes Community College Chris Austin Memorial Scholarship**. Since its inception the scholarship has awarded over \$36,000 to 75 deserving students.

To learn more details about the contest, visit [www.merlefest.org/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest](http://www.merlefest.org/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest).

Sonicbids is the leading matchmaking site for emerging bands and music promoters. Its community of 325,000 registered artists use the site to connect with 25,000 music promoters - ranging from some of the world's largest music festivals and conferences, to clubs, colleges, music supervisors and other people looking to book or license music. When an entrant submits a song for CASC they receive a free trial for the service, plus 30 "Tokens" to submit to 30 Token Gig Listings at no additional cost. Previous Sonicbids members can reactivate their membership for only one dollar. For additional details, please refer to the Sonicbids' CASC page at <http://www.sonicbids.com/ChrisAustinSongwritingContest>.

MerleFest, considered one of the premier music festivals in the country, is an annual homecoming of musicians and music fans held on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. MerleFest was founded in 1988 in memory of the late Eddy Merle Watson, son of American music legend Doc Watson who passed away May 29, 2012. MerleFest is a celebration of “traditional plus” music, a unique mix of music based on the traditional, roots-oriented sounds of the Appalachian region, including bluegrass and old-time music, and expanded to include Americana, country, blues, rock and many other styles. The festival hosts over 90 artists, performing on 14 stages during the course of the four-day event. The annual event has become the primary fundraiser for the WCC Endowment Corporation, funding scholarships, capital projects and other educational needs.

### **About Chris Austin:**

Chris Austin, from Boone, North Carolina, worked as a sideman for Ricky Skaggs for three years, singing and playing guitar, banjo, mandolin and fiddle. During that time he was discovered by executives at Warner Bros. Nashville, who offered him a recording contract. While releasing singles including “Blues Stay Away From Me,” “I Know There’s a Heart in There Somewhere” and “Out of Step,” Austin also developed his songwriting skills, as evidenced in “Same Ol’ Love,” recorded by Skaggs in 1991. On March 16, 1991, Austin’s life was cut tragically short when the private plane carrying him and six other members of Reba McEntire’s band, as well as her tour manager, crashed in the mountains near San Diego. Pete Fisher, then of Warnersongs and currently general manager of the Grand Ole Opry, and Kari Estrin, then MerleFest consultant and *Pickin’ for Merle* video associate producer, initiated the songwriting contest to honor Austin’s memory.

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### **PHOTOS:**



Caption: Finalists in the 2012 Chris Austin Songwriting Contest and host Jim Lauderdale at MerleFest 25.

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