

Wilkes Community College's



MerleFest®

Music. Moments. Memories.™

ON THE CAMPUS OF WILKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE, WILKESBORO, NC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MerleFest Encourages Festival Attendees to Take An Active Role in This Year's Festival

Competitions, showcases and casual performance areas are just some of the ways that festival attendees can become part of MerleFest 2013

WILKESBORO, N.C. (February 12, 2013) — In addition to enjoying performances from over 90 artists on 14 stages, fans will have quite an array of things to keep them occupied during the four days of **MerleFest 2013**. Presented by Lowe's and slated for April 25-28, the four-day music event also features crafts and activities at the Little Pickers Family Area, shopping opportunities at the Heritage Crafts Tent and the Shoppes at MerleFest, nature walks and many food and beverage stops throughout the festival site on the campus of Wilkes Community College in Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

For those who want to take their participation a step further – to actually perform at the festival – MerleFest 2013 attendees should consider the following opportunities, as well:

Chris Austin Songwriting Contest:

Deadline for submissions is Feb 19

The Chris Austin Songwriting Contest, hosted by MerleFest, offers songwriters the opportunity to have their original songs heard by a panel of professional songwriters and others from the Nashville music industry! Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter Jim Lauderdale serves as the volunteer chairperson of this contest. The finals, judged by Matraca Berg, Lynda Dawson and Chris Smither, will be held at the Austin Stage in Alumni Hall on Friday afternoon from 2-3:30 p.m. In addition, the first place winners will receive a performance slot on the Cabin Stage. Full details on CASC can be found [here](#) on the MerleFest website.

The Merle Watson Bluegrass Banjo Contest:

Must be pre-registered online between April 12-22

Merle Watson's identification with the five-string banjo and the recognition of North Carolina artists developing the three-finger style makes the banjo a popular instrument at MerleFest. We celebrate that tradition and encourage pickers to learn and enjoy the banjo by offering one of the nation's foremost banjo contests. Judges for the 2013 Merle

Watson Bluegrass Banjo Contest are Steve Lewis, Blind Boy Paxton and Brandon Green. This contest, hosted by Pete Wernick, is sponsored by Deering Banjo, G7th The Capo Company, Jackson's Music, John Pearse Strings and Separk Music. Full details can be found [here](#) on the MerleFest website.

The Doc Watson Guitar Championship:

Must be pre-registered online between April 12-22

Just as his son Merle is identified with the five-string banjo, Doc Watson is a legendary player of the guitar. Each year MerleFest presents the Doc Watson Guitar Championship to honor Doc's talents as a flat-pick guitarist and to recognize new talents on the instrument. Judges for the 2013 Doc Watson Guitar Championship are Peter Rowan and Ben Cockman with a third judge to be named later. This contest is sponsored by Guild Custom Shop, G7th The Capo Company, Jackson's Music and John Pearse Strings. Full details can be found [here](#) on the MerleFest website.

Youth Showcases:

Application deadline is April 15

The MerleFest Youth Showcases, hosted by Andy May, are *showcases*, not *contests*! These are opportunities for young pickers and singers of any skill level (through age 16) to perform on the Little Pickers Stage in a supportive environment. Those with related skills, such as traditional dance or storytelling, are also encouraged to apply. Accompanists may be any age, and bands are eligible as long as at least one featured performer is 16 years of age or younger. The Youth Showcases are held Friday and Saturday; full details can be found [here](#) on the MerleFest website.

Jam Camp at MerleFest

Pete Wernick's annual Bluegrass Jam Camp will mark its 15th year at MerleFest 2013. The Jam Camp is a unique combination of classroom and personal instruction by team of experienced, understanding teachers, including renowned musician Pete Wernick, Monday through Thursday prior to MerleFest. Camp participants receive both group and individual pointers on instrumental technique, harmony singing and the how-to of a variety of jam situations. If you play guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle, bass or resonator guitar (Dobro), you can be part of a bluegrass jam – and, as a bonus, Thursday afternoon's camp finale is a group performance on the MerleFest cabin stage! Additional details can be found at www.drbanjo.com.

Songwriter Showcase Coffeehouse

Onsite Registration Friday, April 26, from 7:15-8:00 p.m. at the Austin Stage (Alumni Hall)

The MerleFest Songwriter's Coffeehouse gives aspiring songwriters a chance for their songs to be heard! Performance times are determined at 8 p.m.; those selected will be placed in twenty minute slots with two other songwriters. Those pulled from the hat will get four minutes each to perform an original song, as will the second and third place finishers in the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest. Ten alternates will also be drawn and

worked in, if possible. Check the posted schedule in the Lounge for the most up-to-date information.

Pickin' Place

Sponsored by Wells Fargo, the Pickin' Place is an area for musicians of all levels and genres to meet friends and make new ones while singing and playing their favorite tunes together. The area contains three tents: Traditional Jammin' Tent, Bluegrass Jammin' Tent and Anything Goes Jammin' Tent, a stage dedicated to performing, learning, and jamming in a supportive atmosphere, and the Open Stage, which features workshops and open mic sessions. So don't forget your instrument!

Tickets for MerleFest 2013 can be purchased at www.merlefest.org or by calling 1-800-343-7857. **An early bird ticket discount is available through March 10, 2013.** Additional details about this year's festival lineup and other MerleFest information can also be found at the website.

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.

PHOTOS:



Caption: Pickin' Place at MerleFest



Caption: Ben Cockman, 2012 Guitar Contest winner accepting guitar from John Kelley (center) with Pete Wernick (right).

###

MerleFest Media Contacts:

Judy McDonough, Publicist: 615-243-5994 or mcdonoughmedia1@yahoo.com

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