FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 18, 2011
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EIGHT ALABAMIANS HONORED WITH SPECIAL AWARDS BY ALABAMA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

Montgomery, Ala. - The Alabama State Council on the Arts held their biannual *Celebration of the Arts* awards ceremony on the evening of Tuesday, May 17 at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF), located in Blount Cultural Park, 1 Festival Drive, in Montgomery. *Celebration of the Arts* recognizes Alabama artists for their work and contribution to the arts in Alabama and across the United States and beyond. Al Head, Executive Director of the Council stated, "This awards program is an opportunity for the state to recognize special individuals who make the arts happen and bring great credit to our state through their work."

Honorees included Dale Kennington, *Dothan*, Dr. Henry Panion, III, *Birmingham*, Sena Jeter Naslund, *Birmingham/Louisville*, and Joyce Cauthen, *Birmingham,* each receiving a Governor's Arts Award. Rebecca Luker, *Birmingham/New York* received the Alabama's Distinguished Artist Award, Joe McInnes, *Montgomery,* received the Jonnie Dee Little Lifetime Achievement Award, James Bryan, *Mentone,* received the Alabama Folk Heritage Award and Former First Lady Patsy Riley, *Montgomery/Ashland,* received the Special Council Award.

Prior to the awards program, a private reception was held in the Patron's Room at ASF for the award recipients, and their special guests. Jennie Weller created a buffet of Beef Tenderloin, and an array of other culinary treats. Elizabeth Schaum created the floral arrangements for the buffet tables. A public dessert reception immediately followed the ceremony for the award recipients and guests in the lobby of the theatre. Jennie Weller catered the affair and Elizabeth Schaum, special events manager at ASF arranged the flowers.

Alabama Distinguished Artist Awardee Rebecca Luker was joined by her mother, Martha Hales and her stepfather Stan Nelson of Birmingham. Also joining the Luker family was Ms. Luker's childhood friend, Penny Wischusen of Atlanta. The Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement recipient, Joe McInnes of Montgomery was joined by his wife Sandra, son Jody and his wife Mahaley The Alabama Folk Heritage Award recipient, James Bryan of Mentone was accompanied by his wife Pattie, daughter Rachel and her husband Matt Combs, and Carl Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Martin and Mr. and Mrs. Terry Hutcheson. Governor's Arts Award recipient Joyce Cauthen was accompanied by her husband Jim Cauthen along with Carey and Christine Cauthen. Visual artist and Governor's Arts Award recipient Dale Kennington was accompanied by Bob Lindstrom. Noted author and Governor's Arts Award recipient, Sena Jeter Naslund was joined by her brother John Jeter, Jeanie Thompson, executive director of the Alabama Writers' Forum, John Hafner, and Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Moore. Dr. Henry Panion, III of Birmingham was accompanied by his wife Karyl Panion along with numerous family members in honor of his Governor's Arts Award. Accepting the Special Council Legacy Award for former First Lady Patsy Riley was Dr. Joe Busta, Vice-President of Birmingham Southern College in Mobile. Dr. Busta was co-chair of the artist selection committee that successfully raised private donations and commissioned a bronze sculpture of Helen Keller to be placed in Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. His wife Genie Busta accompanied Dr. Busta.

Noted VIPs were on hand to congratulate the awardees including Senator Hank Sanders, Senator Ted Little, Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange, Montgomery Representative Joe Hubbard, President and Publisher of the Montgomery Advertiser, Samuel Martin, Julie Hall Friedman, Chair of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, along with other Council members: Ralph Frohsin, Jim Harrison, III (Vice Chair of the Council), Dora Hall James, Elaine Johnson (Secretary of the Council), Selwyn Jones, Vaughan I Morrissette, Rebecca T. B. Quinn, Linda Rochester, Lee Sentell, Ceil Jenkins Snow, Sontonia T. K. Stephens, Lisa B. Weil and former Council member Jim Inscoe,

ABOUT THE CEREMONY

The evening's program celebrated "The Year of Alabama Music" and performers for the evening's event began with entertainment by David Hood & the Decoys followed by Eddie Floyd, a 1960s soul/R&B singer and songwriter.

The Decoys are a rock n' roll band, featuring five very seasoned musicians, including Scott Boyer, Mike Dillon, Kelvin Holly, David Hood, and N. C. Thurman. Hood, a bass guitarist was a member of the world renowned Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section, better known as "The Swampers," made famous in the song "Sweet Home Alabama." Hood has played on a list of albums that reads like a who's who of the music industry, including artists such as Aretha Franklin, Bob Seger, Rod Stewart, The Staple Singers, Paul Simon, Traffic, and many more. David Hood and the rest of "The Swampers," were recently inducted into the Musicians Hall of Fame in Nashville,TN and into the Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

Following the Decoy's performance, Eddie Floyd took the stage. Floyd is a, best known for his hit song "Knock on Wood" in 1967. The song was originally intended for Otis Redding, but Floyd recorded it and he and other R &B notables such as Wilson Pickett made it a hit. Floyd founded The Falcons, which were forerunners to future Detroit vocal groups such as The Temptations and The Four Tops. Eddie Floyd was born in Montgomery, but raised in Detroit, MI.

A bluegrass band called "Turkey Foot" performed in honor of Joyce Cauthen (Governor's Arts Award recipient) for her contribution to documenting and preserving Folk Life in Alabama. Honoring Dale Kennington (Governor's Arts Award recipient) was musician Ron Handy who played the saxophone. Sena Jeter Naslund (Governor's Arts Award recipient) was honored by having excerpts read from her book "Four Spirits" by the actress, Dr. Tommie Tonea" Stewart. Honoring Dr. Henry Panion, III (Governor's Arts Award recipient) was the group "Overfloe Jazz."

In honor of former First Lady Patsy Riley and her Special Council Legacy Award performers were Christie Connolly and Jordan Crenshaw of Birmingham Southern College acting a scene from the play "The Miracle Worker." Others honoring Mrs. Riley on stage were Annie Park, Brian Helton and Patrick Johnson from the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB). Interpreter, Kaneesha Stallworth from the Alabama School for the Deaf (ASD) signed for audience members.

Performers honoring James Bryan for his Alabama Folk Heritage Award were Matt and Rachel Combs. Rachel Combs is James Bryan's Daughter who grew up playing bluegrass music with her father James. Rachel is married to Matt, who is also a bluegrass musician.

Rebecca Luker's tribute on stage was by Abe Reybold, Kristen Bowden Sharp and George Dvorsky. They were accompanied by The Red Mountain Theatre Company Youth Ensembles.

Belinda Peoples and Ashley Wieronski honored Joe McInness in song. At the close of the program, all of the evening's previous performers arrived on stage close the program with the song "Stars Fell on Alabama." The Red Mountain Theatre Company Youth Ensembles accompanied the performers for this finale.

ABOUT THE AWARDS:
The Governor's Arts Award honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the arts in their respective communities and the state of Alabama.

Dale Kennington, currently residing in Dothan, creates large paintings with oil on canvas. Her works are included in more than twenty-five public collections throughout the United States, including The Federal Reserve; American Committee for UNICEF, New York, NY; Cheekwood Museum of Art, Nashville, TN; and every art museum in Alabama. Internationally her work is in the collection of King Carl Gustav XVI of Sweden and the United States Embassy, Paris, France. She was one of twelve artists selected for the exhibition Voices Rising: Alabama Women at the Millennium, presented at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. She is listed in Who's Who in American Art and is part of the "Art In Embassies" program of the U. S. Department of State.

Dr. Henry Panion, III of Birmingham holds degrees in music education and music theory from Alabama A & M University and Ohio State University, respectively. He is best known for his work as conductor and arranger for superstar Stevie Wonder. Dr. Panion has led many of the world's most notable orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, the Bolshoi Theater Orchestra, the Birmingham (England) Symphony, the Orchestra of Paris, the Melbourne (Australia) Symphony, the Rio de Janeiro Philharmonic, the Ra'anana Philharmonic, the Nice Symphony, the Gothenburg Symphony, and the Boston Pops Orchestra. The two-CD set Natural Wonder features Dr. Panion conducting his arrangements of many of Stevie Wonder's award-winning, chart-topping songs with Stevie and the Tokyo Philharmonic.

Sena Jeter Naslund was born in Birmingham. In high school she played cello with the Alabama Pops Orchestra and won a music scholarship to the University of Alabama, but turned it down in favor of studying writing at Birmingham-Southern College. Naslund is currently "Writer in Residence" at the University of Louisville and director of the Spalding University MFA Writing Program. She is also the Poet Laureate for Kentucky. Naslund is the founder and editor of *The Louisville Review* and the Fleur-de-Lis Press. Her published novels include: *Sherlock in Love* (1993), *The Animal Way to Love* (1993), *Ahab's Wife* (1999), *Four Spirits* (2003), *Abundance* (2006), *Adam and Eve* (2010); and two collections of stories: *Ice Skating at the North Pole* (1989) and *The Disobedience of Water* (1997). She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Kentucky Foundation for Women, and the Kentucky Arts Council, and has won the Harper Lee Award and the Southeastern Library Association Fiction Award.

Joyce Cauthen of Birmingham is the former executive director of the Alabama Folklife Association, a statewide organization that sponsors the research, promotion and preservation of Alabama's folk culture. She is the author of *With Fiddle and Well-Rosined Bow: Old-Time Fiddling in Alabama*, published in 1989 by the University of Alabama Press, and has served as the producer of numerous recordings of traditional music of Alabama, including *Possum Up a Gum Stump: Home* and *Commercial and Field Recordings of Alabama Fiddlers.* Cauthen's latest project was a CD and booklet entitled *Bullfrog Jumped*, which features recordings of Alabama children's folksongs and games in the 40s. Cauthen has worked with the Alabama Folklife Association, the Alabama State Council on the Arts, the Birmingham Cultural and Heritage Foundation, and other organizations celebrating and preserving the old-time musical traditions of the state.

The Jonnie Dee Little Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes someone who has devoted a lifetime of energy, service, and contributions to the arts in Alabama and is named after a past Council member from Auburn who died in 1988 after serving with great distinction on the Council and a lifetime of supporting the arts in Alabama.

Joe McInnes retired from Blount International Inc. after 30 years serving as the vice-president and CEO of Blount International Inc. and president of the Blount Foundation. As president and director of the Blount Foundation, Mr. McInnes was instrumental in the development of the Montgomery-based Alabama Shakespeare Festival. McInnes directed foundational funding to many arts organizations and arts projects throughout the state. His community involvement includes president of the Montgomery United Way, president of the Tuckabatchee Area Council Boy Scouts, chairman of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, board director of the Alabama Humanities Foundation and trustee of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. In 2003, he accepted an appointment from Governor Riley as director of the Alabama Department of Transportation.

The Distinguished Artist Award honors a professional artist who is a native of Alabama and who has gained significant national recognition over an extended period.

Rebecca Luker is a native of Birmingham, now residing in New York City. Luker was most recently active on Broadway in Disney's *Mary Poppins* in the role of Mrs. Banks. Rebecca received a Tony Award nomination and Outer Critics Circle Award nomination for Best Featured Actress. Also on Broadway she played Claudia opposite Antonio Banderas in *Nine*, Marian Paroo in the revival of *The Music Man* (Tony Award nomination, Outer Critics Circle Award nomination, Drama Desk Award nomination) and Maria Rainer in the revival of *The Sound of Music* (Outer Critics Circle Award nomination). TV credits include a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie Cupid and Cate, Law and Order SVU - Poison, The Good Wife - Taking Control and several PBS broadcasts including The Boston Pops Concerts, My Favorite Broadway - The Leading Ladies and The Love Songs, The Rogers and Hart Story, and Some Enchanted Evening to name a few.

The Folk Heritage Award was established to recognize master folk artists who have made outstanding contributions in the arts in Alabama.

James Bryan of Mentone has been a fiddler almost since birth. He won his first competition at 12, apprenticed with bluegrass master Kenny Baker, and took the title of Tennessee Valley Fiddle King at 17. Bryan eventually joined Norman Blake's Rising Fawn String Ensemble, where his mastery of the fiddle and repertoire of old-timey songs was honed. In the mid-1980s he recorded *Lookout Blues* and *The First of May* with Rounder Records, a decade later collaborating with guitarist Carl Jones in recording *Two Pictures*. Bryan, one of the 16 former fiddle kings who have reigned during 39 years of competition at the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention (TVOTFC) spreading their musical influence worldwide. He has entertained in places as diverse as the Smithsonian Institute's Bicentennial Celebration on The Mall in Washington, D.C., onstage at the Grand Ole Opry, and before a U.S. President. Bryan has recorded traditional fiddle tunes for posterity and mentored young fiddlers in their own music studios across the country.

The Special Council Legacy Award recognizes individuals who make unique contributions for the public arena that will have a lasting import on future generations in Alabama and beyond.

Former First Lady Patsy Riley spearheaded the project to have a statue commissioned and created for Statuary Hall in Washington DC of world-renowned Alabamian Helen Keller. The statue was unveiled October 7, 2009 and is currently in the new Visitor Center at Union Station. Mrs. Riley wanted Helen Keller, one of the world's most recognized and honored Americans to not only represent Alabama in Statuary Hall but to be an inspiration to the millions of visitors to the Capitol. The Helen Keller sculpture is the first sculpture in the U.S. Capitol of an American with disabilities, and the first sculpture of a child. Mrs. Riley served as honorary chairperson of the "Helen Keller Campaign and Artists Selection Committee" reviewing proposals from more than 30 different artists before selecting Edward Hlavka to create the bronze statue. The committee worked with the Alabama State Council on the Arts, which coordinated the selection process.

ABOUT THE ALABAMA STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is the official state arts agency of Alabama. The staff of the Council, directed by Al Head, administers the grants programs and provides technical assistance in arts planning and programming. The Council receives its support through an annual appropriation from the Alabama Legislature and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Celebration of the Arts is held every other year and is FREE and open to the public. The next event is scheduled for May of 2013.

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