

## The Storytelling Arts Center of the Southeast Opens With David Holt



On Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup> the Storytelling Arts Center of the Southeast (SACS) opened in downtown Laurinburg to the delight of the 150 folks who came to hear David Holt in the center's first event. Until now, the center has not had a permanent home. The building in the center of the downtown area was erected in 1938 and Scotland County residents have fond memories of shopping in the facility when it was a department store. With a grant from the NC Rural Center for Economic Development, the board rented the facility and hired staff. Tim Morrissey, the new Executive Director comes with much experience in leading non-profit organizations across the state. Former SACS board co-chair, Jan Schmidt, is the new Marketing Director and Frances Frye is the Office Manager.

Brenda Gilbert, Board Chair, said, "The first order of business was to build bathrooms. The local community came to the rescue, donating thousands of dollars worth of building materials and supplies. One of the crowning touches was the beautiful tile bathroom floors. Odd and ends of tile were donated. Jan Schmidt put them together in an amazing quilt design and her husband John laid each one. Our bathrooms are the best in downtown Laurinburg!"

"The first performance was amazing. David Holt was not only the consummate performer, he was also gracious and generous. He encouraged us to persevere in our efforts to grow the local economy through the art of storytelling," said Gilbert.

Plans for the facility include a retail area for storytelling resources and ongoing activities including storytelling performances, classes and workshops. A recording studio in the facility will allow people to make CD's of their own stories to give to family members and friends. Other kinds of arts events will also be held in the center and the facility may be rented by local groups for events and banquets.

SACS has sponsored the Storytelling Festival of Carolina for the past two years and will hold the third festival April 24-26, 2009. The next big event for the center will be the

Bold-Faced Liars' Showdown on January 24<sup>th</sup>, featuring a tall tale competition in the afternoon and an evening performance by Ed Stivender.

“It’s hard to believe that we’ve come so far in such a short time,” said Gilbert. “Our community has embraced the idea of becoming known for storytelling and has given financial support and encouragement at every turn. I can’t wait to see where we’ll be in ten years.”