

Arts Center seeks community "Heroes" for storytelling event
by John Lentz
The Laurinburg Exchange

The Storytelling Arts Center of the Southeast in Laurinburg is now accepting story submissions for 'American Heroes, a Celebration of Americans' Strength in Story and Song', scheduled to take place Sept. 12 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

"Community heroes are everywhere and come in all shapes and sizes," SACS Executive Director Jan Schmidt said. "We want to know about your hero. Let us know who has inspired you, what your hero has done that went beyond what was expected, and how their heroic act has made the community they live in a better place."

A panel of judges will pick several stories and experienced storytellers will weave these stories into tellable tales that will be told at the September 12 celebration, according to Schmidt.

"We want to know who you admire and we want to bring those stories to life."

The inaugural event is a way of memorializing the tragedy of Sept. 11, 2001, Schmidt said, while simultaneously celebrating ordinary Americans who show extraordinary bravery or give extraordinary contributions to their community.

"We are celebrating the amazing potency and energy of the American people of all stripes and plaids together," Schmidt said.

Entries need not be confined to Scotland County or the surrounding area, according to Center Chairman of the Board Brenda Gilbert.

"Although we will be advertising for stories in Scotland County and in the contiguous counties across our area," Gilbert said, "the Arts Center staff invites anyone across the state to contribute stories about their community heroes."

All those who submit a story will receive a certificate. Some of the stories not selected for storytelling will be placed on posters with pictures to hang around the center.

"We are looking for content, who this person is and what they have done to make them admired," Schmidt said. "We are not looking for the people who we read about in textbooks and we are not looking for great writers. What we want are wonderful stories about heroes that we can admire and honor."

All stories must be submitted by Aug. 12, 2009. Entries to the Storytelling Arts Center of the Southeast, P.O. Box 2154, Laurinburg, NC 28353 or email them to info@sfoc.info. For more information, call 910-291-0929 or check the website, www.storyarts.info.

"From 10 a.m. until noon there will be fun games and craft activities, food, and music for

the whole family to enjoy," Schmidt said. "From noon to 2 p.m. will be the presentation of the hero stories, as told by professional tellers, with music and a ceremony honoring those who have given their lives for the community and country."

Submissions should be no more than 500 words and no less than 250 words, and will be judged on content, i.e. the heroism of the person written about. Writing ability will not be judged.

Entries must include a description of the person in 50 words or less (the 50 words may be in addition to the story). Include the person's name, residence, present age and the age of the subject when the hero event occurred. State whether the person is male or female, living or deceased, and his or her relationship to the writer.

Entries must include the writer's name, full address, phone number, and email address if available, and must include permission to allow SACS to use the story in a publication and/or as a story told by a storyteller; permission must also be given to build upon the story as it was submitted.

If a story is selected for telling, the author must be willing to speak with the storyteller who will tell the story.

The person written about must meet the following criteria: he or she must be living now or have lived in the United States; the subject must not be famous or in history books, i.e. an ordinary person who has done something extraordinary for other people, community or country, not just their own family members; and he or she must be considered a hero who makes life or the community a better place.

Stories must be factual, about a real person and a real event. Examples include a fireman, soldier, teacher, policeman, community worker, lifeguard, friend, neighbor, pilot, uncle, etc.