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Packway Handle Band Headlines 10th Annual Andalusia Bluegrass Festival Oct. 25

Athens Group's 'Dark, Passionate' Work Echoes Flannery O'Connor's Fiction

MILLEDGEVILLE, Ga. – The Packway Handle Band of Athens, one of America's top touring bluegrass bands, will headline the annual Bluegrass Festival at Andalusia Farm, the final home of author Flannery O'Connor, on Oct. 25.

The festival will be staged in the large field behind the farmhouse where O'Connor lived the final 14 years of her life. The opening acts will be popular Milledgeville-area bluegrass bands Heart Pine and Sawgrass.

The festival will run from 4-9 p.m., starting with porch pickin' from 4-6 p.m. The public is invited to bring instruments to join in the fun. Admission is \$10 for adults. Students and seniors are \$5 and children under 12 are free. Ample parking is available at no charge.

The public is also invited to bring picnic suppers. In addition, food and drink will be available for purchase from popular Milledgeville businesses. Old Clinton Barbeque will offer sandwiches and Top Dog Growlers will provide microbrew beers. Festival patrons may bring Frisbees to throw in a side field before the music starts.

Milledgeville environmentalist Louis Kaduk will lead 45-minute trail walks at 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. to share the history, plants and wildlife of the 544-acre farm.

The Packway Handle Band, formed in 2003, was voted most popular bluegrass band three years in a row in the readers' choice Flagpole Magazine Music Awards in Athens. The group, known for its three- and four-part harmonies and wildly energetic performances, was a finalist three straight years in the prestigious Telluride Bluegrass Festival Band Competition.

"We are delighted and honored to have such a highly regarded band with national stature and widespread popularity headlining our annual Bluegrass Festival," said Elizabeth Wylie, executive director of the Flannery O'Connor-Andalusia Foundation. "Their work has been described as 'dark and passionate ... with a side of blood,' so they certainly echo the best of Flannery O'Connor's Southern gothic work.

“I hope our visitors and bluegrass fans who come to the festival will take time during their stay to enjoy this remarkable place that inspired a great writer,” Wylie said. “People should feel free to enjoy the property before the music starts.”

O’Connor, whose “Complete Short Stories” was voted one of the 10 most important books of the 20th Century by a panel of American and British authors, wrote much of her significant work when she lived at Andalusia from 1950-64. She died of complications from lupus 50 years ago at age 39.

The greatly expanded Bluegrass Festival is one of a number of new developments at the farm:

- New attractions. The Hill House, the home of tenant farmers during O’Connor’s lifetime, has been restored and is now open to the public. The Cow Barn is also now open to the public and is often visited by literary fans who love the story, “Good Country People,” in which the character Hulga is talked out of her prosthetic leg by a smooth-talking Bible salesman in a barn’s hay loft.
- A new logo. The logo is in a hand-painted sign brush format that recalls the era of 1950-1964, the years O’Connor lived at the family farm and the period in which she wrote most of her significant work. “The logo is clearly identifiable as unique to Andalusia and is in line with professional graphic branding standards,” Wylie said. The logo will be reflected in all of Andalusia’s printed material.
- A redesigned website (www.andalusiafarm.org). The site will enable O’Connor fans to make financial donations online more easily.

ABOUT THE FLANNERY O’CONNOR-ANDALUSIA FOUNDATION

The Foundation is dedicated to the restoration, preservation and appreciation of Andalusia, the final home of Flannery O’Connor, and to perpetuate her place in the roster of great writers of the 20th Century. The 544-acre farm is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Thursday through Sunday. For more information: www.andalusiafarm.org

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