

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 18, 2017

Contact: Barbara Reed

Public Information Officer

334-242-4076, ext. 223

barbara.reed@arts.alabama.gov



EIGHT SPECIAL ALABAMIANS TO BE HONORED AT CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS AWARDS ON MAY 24

MONTGOMERY, ALA. - The Alabama State Council on the Arts will honor eight outstanding Alabamians at the "Celebration of the Arts" awards ceremony on Wednesday, May 24, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, located at 1 Festival Drive, Montgomery. A coffee and dessert reception will immediately follow the awards ceremony in the lobby of the theatre. The event is FREE and open to the public, but reservations and tickets are required.

The Council's "Celebration of the Arts" award program shines a spotlight on the arts in Alabama and individuals who have made important contributions to our state's rich cultural landscape. Al Head, Executive Director of the Council stated, ***"These individuals represent the scope and breadth of artistic diversity, talent, leadership and generosity that is an integral part of the cultural landscape of Alabama."***

This year ASCA will be presenting awards to: a soul vocalist and Hall of Fame rock legend; a master of the rock-n-roll keyboard; a renowned bluegrass musician, singer/songwriter; a highly respected and long-time museum director; a radio/television/literature program host; a nationally recognized city planner/designer and educator extraordinaire; a world famous African-American painter; and an immensely popular public official and international advocate for the arts. This year's recipients are:

Gail Andrews, *Birmingham* – Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award

Eddie Floyd, *Montgomery* – Alabama's Distinguished Artist Award

Dr. Art Bacon, *Talladega* – Governor's Arts Award

Chuck Leavell, *Tuscaloosa/Dry Branch, GA* – Governor's Arts Award

Cheryl Morgan, *Birmingham* – Governor's Arts Award

Dr. Don Noble, *Tuscaloosa* – Governor's Arts Award

Jake Landers, *Tuscumbia* – The Alabama Folk Heritage Award

Mayor Todd Strange, *Montgomery* – The Special Council Legacy Award

The Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award named after the late Jonnie Dee Riley Little represents recognition for an individual who has devoted significant leadership, service, and support to the arts in Alabama. **The 2017 Jonnie Dee Riley Little Award recipient is Gail Andrews** of Birmingham. Andrews has served as the Director of the Birmingham Museum of Art since 1996. Andrews has overseen several groundbreaking exhibitions and helped establish the Birmingham Museum of Art as an important presenter of works rarely seen in America.

An acknowledged authority on folk art and textiles, she has written numerous articles and catalogues including *Black Belt to Hill Country: Alabama Made Quilts*; *Southern Quilts: A New View*, quilt and needlework chapters for *Made in Alabama: A State Legacy*, the introduction to the book *Revelations: Alabama's Visionary Folk Artists*, and edited and contributed essays to *Pictured in My Mind: Contemporary American Self-Taught Art*.

A passionate believer in the transformative role of museums in the cultural life of the community, Andrews is actively involved in a variety of arts and educational organizations locally, regionally, and nationally.

The Alabama Distinguished Artist Award honors a professional artist who is considered a native or adopted son/daughter of Alabama and who has earned significant national acclaim for their art over an extended period. **The 2017 Distinguished Artist Award recipient is Eddie Floyd.** Floyd is an American soul-R&B singer and songwriter, best known for his work on the Stax record label in the 1960s and 1970s including the number-one R&B hit song *Knock on Wood*.

Floyd was born in Montgomery, Alabama, but grew up in Detroit, Michigan. He founded the group The Falcons. They were forerunners to future Detroit vocal groups such as The Temptations and The Four Tops. Wilson Pickett was recruited into the group as the lead singer, but Pickett left the group to pursue a solo career.

In 1966, Floyd recorded a song initially written for Otis Redding. That song was *Knock on Wood*. This song launched Floyd's solo career, and has been covered by over a hundred different artists from David Bowie to Count Basie.

The Governor's Arts Award honors individuals who have made unique contributions to the arts in Alabama. **Four awards will be given this year: Dr. Art Bacon, Talladega; Chuck Leavell, Tuscaloosa/Dry Branch, GA; Cheryl Morgan, Birmingham; and Dr. Don Noble of Tuscaloosa.**

A 2017 Governor's Arts Award recipient is Dr. Art Bacon. Dr. Bacon is known by many as an artist, educator, and scientist. However, art has always been his passion.

People are Bacon's subjects of choice; especially, older and neglected people whose experiences show in their faces. In the early days, he worked almost exclusively with ink washes and lines—very little color. He was a minimalist and believed that color interfered with his expression of feelings. He now uses more color and acrylics as well as a number of other media and techniques—often combining several. However, he still likes using varying line widths and his palette is still limited in color.

Bacon's paintings and drawings are held in numerous private collections and institutions including Alabama State University, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Mobile Museum of Art, Heritage Hall Museum, University of Maryland, and Comer Museum. He has also been featured in *Southern Living* and *Lakeside* magazines, *Black Art in America* — an online journal and other publications.

A 2017 Governor's Arts Award recipient is Chuck Leavell. Leavell is a world-renowned musician, who was a member of the Allman Brothers Band during the height of their 1970s popularity. He is a long-time touring member of The Rolling Stones and has also toured and recorded with Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Gov't Mule and John Mayer.

In the early 70s, while Leavell was doing session work at Capricorn Records he found himself playing with Dr. John and it wasn't long before he caught the attention of Gregg Allman. Leavell joined the Allman band in September 1972 after the death of Duane Allman.

While opening shows for The Allman Brothers Band he encountered The Rolling Stones. Leavell toured with the Rolling Stones on the 1982 European Tour and recorded with the Stones when the band was not touring. He has continued to tour and record with The Rolling Stones ever since. He has also recorded with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards on solo projects.

A 2017 Governor's Arts Award recipient is Cheryl Morgan. Morgan is an architect and retired professor of architecture from Auburn University. She has three decades of teaching and working with various architectural programs. She recently retired as Director of Auburn's Urban Studio in Birmingham.

Morgan practiced architecture and urban design in the San Francisco Bay Area for over eight years. She worked with a number of firms before coming to Auburn in 1992. While in California her work focused on the design of new and adaptive reuse of buildings. Professor Morgan's professional practice now focuses on facilitation, urban design, community planning and graphic design.

The Urban Studio's Small Town Design Initiative Program a significant component of Auburn's outreach agenda has worked with over 70 small towns and neighborhoods in Alabama under Professor Morgan's direction.

A 2017 Governor's Arts Award recipient is Dr. Don Noble. Dr. Noble is the host of APR's book review series as well as host of *Bookmark* which airs on Alabama Public Television. A widely published scholar specializing in American and Southern literature, Dr. Noble received the Eugene Current-Garcia Award as Alabama's distinguished literary scholar for the year 2000 and was nominated for a Regional Emmy Award in 2006 and 2011. In addition, he serves on the planning committee of several literary conferences.

Dr. Noble's book reviews air during *Morning Edition* and feature works primarily by Alabama writers. His reviews focus on why these writers are disturbed with their particular subjects and how they succeed or fail in addressing issues of concern to Alabama readers.

The Alabama Folk Heritage Award was established to recognize master folk artists who have made outstanding contributions in the arts in Alabama. **The 2017 Folk Heritage Award recipient is Jake Landers** of Tuscumbia. Landers is a well-respected bluegrass musician, singer and songwriter whose career has spanned more than five decades. One of his career milestones came in 1969 when Bill Monroe

Not only is Landers a well-respected bluegrass performer, but he is also a gifted songwriter. He played for several years as a member of the Dixie Gentlemen. During this time they recorded five albums which contained almost 20 songs either wrote or co-wrote by Landers including *Soldier's Return* and *Your Heart Tells the Truth*. After the Dixiemen disbanded in 1976, he began to record albums for Old Homestead, including one that comprised all gospel material but all contained several self-penned numbers.

In 1989, the Kentucky Headhunters, charted at number 25, with their rock country version of his song *Walk Softly on This Heart of Mine*.

The Annual Jake Landers Bluegrass Concert, started in 2010 is held each year in Sheffield, Alabama. The concert primarily honors Lander's contributions to bluegrass music and his talent as a musician and songwriter.

The Special Council Legacy Award was established to recognize individuals who are not necessary an artist or from the arts world, but have had a great impact on the arts in Alabama and leave a significant legacy as a result of their contributions. **The 2017 Special Council Legacy Award recipient is Mayor Todd Strange** of Montgomery. Strange became the 56th mayor of the city of Montgomery in 2009. Prior to becoming mayor, Strange served as chairman of the Montgomery County Commission for nearly five years. He has also served as former president, CEO and co-owner of Blount Strange Automotive Group. Prior to that position he was director of the Alabama Department of Commerce (formerly known as the Alabama Development Office). Strange has helped to bring major industries to Alabama, including the Hyundai Manufacturing Facility in Montgomery.

Mayor Strange played a key role in Alabama's Cultural Exchange with Pietrasanta, Italy and has continued to nurture and support relationships within this sister-city connection since its inception in 2007. Strange has been one of the primary energies behind the current cultural exchange due to his vision for the arts and his friendship with Mayor Massimo Mallegni of Pietrasanta. Most recently, Strange expanded the scope and breadth of the exchange between Alabama and Pietrasanta when the 2016 Alabama photography exhibition of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Soil* traveled to Pietrasanta showcasing powerful images of the Black Belt region with the photography of Chip Cooper, Robin McDonald and Jerry Siegel.

The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and the Montgomery Art Guild curated the exhibition that traveled to Pietrasanta from a juried selection of over a hundred works of art. Twenty-one pieces by nineteen artists were selected to represent works inspired from the state of Alabama.

*The Alabama State Council on the Arts promotes Alabama's diverse and rich artistic resources while highlighting excellence and education experiences. **Complimentary Tickets are limited and are available on a first come, first serve basis. To reserve tickets, please contact: The Alabama State Council on the Arts at 334-242-4076 or the ASF Box Office at 334-271-5353.***