



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact Information:

Melinda Musgrove, Director of Marketing and Communications
1600 6th Avenue South, Suite 200
Birmingham, AL 35233-1711
Office: 205.638.5948
Email: melindamusgrove@childrensharbor.com

CHILDREN'S HARBOR TO HOST HUMANITIES AT THE HARBOR

BIRMINGHAM, AL- Children's Harbor along with **the Board of Directors of the Alabama Humanities Foundation** will host "Humanities at the Harbor" on Sunday, October 23rd from 5:00p.m.-7:00p.m. The cocktail reception will be a time to honor the 2016 Humanities Award recipients **Ben and Luanne Russell** and mingle with the AHF's annual luncheon keynote speaker **Stewart McLaurin, president of the White House Historical Association**, and **Roland Mesnier, former White House pastry chef from 1979-2004**. All event proceeds benefit the Alabama Humanities Foundation. Tickets are \$150 each and \$250 for a couple. They will be available for purchase at the door on Sunday.

The reception will be held at Children's Harbor Family Center, the Russells' premier philanthropic endeavor in Birmingham. The Family Center, built in 2001, is a collaborative effort with Children's of Alabama. Approximately 27,000 patients and their families used the facility's programs and services during their time of need in 2015. Programs include free licensed counseling, education, tutoring, and support services such as scheduled interactive activities, an exercise room, nap rooms, library, laundry facilities, and play areas. Services and programs are available to all children and families who use Children's Hospital, which last year included children from every county in Alabama, 41 other states, and 8 countries.

During the reception, attendees will get a behind-the-scenes look into the inner-workings of the the innovative resource and counseling center facility and how they fill these children's lives with happiness, wonder and imagination so they can have a piece of hope that helps them through hospitalization, treatments, surgeries and the everyday adversities that living with a chronic illness may bring. Staff members will be on hand to tell stories of hope and healing emphasizing the ways their program has made an impact in thousands of seriously ill children's lives.

The walk-through tour will include food stations prepared by **well-known Birmingham chef George McMillan III** and his wife **Meredith McMillan, founder and chef behind the delicious Merry Cheese Crisps**. The patriotic food stations are included to honor special guests Stewart McLaurin and Chef Roland, whose careers have been deeply rooted in U.S. Presidential history and life at the White House.

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About Children's Harbor

Established in 1989 by Ben and Luanne Russell, Children's Harbor is a fully qualified 501(c)(3) charitable organization with the sole purpose of serving seriously ill children and their families at two locations. Children's Harbor Family Center at Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children offers patient and sibling activities as well as support through counseling care and educational resources. Children's Harbor's Lake Martin campus hosts camping services through partnering organizations, providing patients and families a place of rest and restoration.

Biographies

Stewart D. McLaurin | Keynote Speaker for Alabama Humanities Foundation Annual Luncheon on October 24th

Stewart D. McLaurin has served as President of the White House Historical Association since May 2014. McLaurin's career spans the non-profit, education, and public policy fields. Over the past 30 years, he has held senior positions with George Washington's Mount Vernon, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, the Motion Picture Association, Georgetown University, American Red Cross, and the federal government. Prior to joining the White House Historical Association, McLaurin served as Executive Vice President for American Village Citizenship Trust in Montevallo. McLaurin is a proud graduate of The University of Alabama where he studied American History and Political Science.

Roland Mesnier | Special Guest

Roland Mesnier has been pastry chef for five presidents. In 1979, First Lady Rosalynn Carter hired him as head pastry chef at the White House. During his twenty-five years there, he created desserts for more than forty queens, kings, princes, princesses, and heads of state, and he was beloved for his famous series of gingerbread houses displayed in the State Dining Room each Christmas holiday. He continues to educate expert and novice bakers about his craft with his books, and he travels around the world teaching pastry techniques and sharing fond memories of life at the White House. Among his many books are *A Sweet World of White House Desserts* (2011) and *The White House in Gingerbread: Memories and Recipes* (2015), both published by the White House Historical Association.

Ben and Luanne Russell | 2016 Alabama Humanities Award

Natives of Alexander City, Alabama, Ben and Luanne Russell met in eighth grade, married in 1961, and have spent their lives in keeping with values inherited from their families. Ben started his working career with summer jobs at Russell Corporation, founded in 1902 by his grandfather, Benjamin Russell. Ben became President of Russell Lands, Inc. in 1970 and it has since become a diverse organization with more than 500 employees. In 1987, Ben founded CARE Alabama, the first-ever statewide campaign for CARE, the world's largest private relief and development agency. In 1989, Ben and Luanne Russell founded Children's Harbor, a non-profit with the sole mission of serving seriously ill children and their families at two locations, the Lake Martin campus and the Family Center at Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children.

Through the Russell's lifelong support of Children's of Alabama health care system, Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children is now the third largest pediatric hospital in the U.S. As part of their commitment to children and families and in keeping with their interest in the humanities and the arts, the Russells have interned two time capsules at Children's Harbor on Lake Martin – one in 1989 as a 50-year capsule and another in 2000 as a 100-year capsule. Ben enjoys metalworking, art, poetry, flying, and writing. Luanne enjoys bridge, literature, and travel. Together Ben and Luanne contribute to Alabama's future through their philanthropy and service to the common good.