



Virginia Highlands Festival
335 Cummings Street
Abingdon, VA 24210

Contact: Becky Caldwell, Executive Director
Office: (276) 623-5266
info@vahighlandsfestival.org

High-resolution photos may be downloaded from the
website www.VaHighlandsFestival.org

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“KICK UP YOUR HEELS!” AS THE 69TH ANNUAL
VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS FESTIVAL RETURNS TO BARTER SQUARE
FESTIVAL DATES: FRIDAY, JULY 28-SUNDAY, AUGUST 6, 2017**

ABINGDON, Va./July 10, 2017/ – YOU SPOKE, WE LISTENED: Festival audiences will be “kicking up their heels” at Barter Square this summer! The Virginia Highlands Festival has “gone green” by bringing major aspects of the annual Festival back to the beautiful Barter lawn.

“The rumors are true!” exclaimed Becky Caldwell, Festival Executive Director. “Our award-winning Juried Arts & Crafts Show is moving back to Barter, and we couldn’t be more excited about this homecoming!”

Arts & Crafts, along with food vendors, street performers, and the Youth Tent are moving back to Barter Square on Main St. in downtown Abingdon. New sidewalks, improved landscaping, and the LOVE letters will welcome Festival-goers back to the Festival of their youth on the grounds of the historic Barter Theatre.

Remember life before you had responsibilities? It’s time now for some fun again! Take a break from your usual routine, throw out your schedule, and pick up the Festival’s. *Highlander* program guides are available at shops and restaurants throughout the region, or dive deeper into the schedule of activities on the website: www.VaHighlandsFestival.org.

Break out the sneakers, dust off your favorite pair of sunglasses, and load everyone into the car. Here are just a few ways to celebrate summer and “Kick Up Your Heels” at this year’s Festival:

- **Juried Arts & Crafts:** The region’s best artisans will be gathered at Barter Square. Browse the booths and get inspired at this Pinterest-worthy show, running Friday, July 28-Sunday, August 6; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, rain or shine. One-of-a-kind finds, craft demonstrations, food vendors and more are waiting under the big tents.

- Antiques Market: On Saturday, July 29th the popular Antiques Market opens under the big tents at the Higher Ed Center with 100 booths brimming with treasures. Antiques aficionados will want to mark their calendars and set their alarms for Early Bird shopping on the 29th from 8-10 a.m. This show runs from July 29-Sunday, August 6, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (closing early at 5 p.m. on August 6).
- Signature Art Dance Performance: This year's Signature Art is dance. For the first time ever, the dance schools that call Abingdon "home" are performing on the same stage. Led by Signature Artists Highlands Ballet Company, they will be joined by Appalachian Ballet, Grace Studio of Motion and Dance, and Xtreme Dance Company on Friday, August 4th at 7:30 p.m. at the McGlothlin Center at Emory & Henry College.
- National Dance Day Flash Mob: Whether you dance with the stars or just think you can dance, all are welcome to join us on Saturday, July 29th as we film our own entry into the National Dance Day video stream. Participants have two opportunities to strut their stuff: 11:15 a.m. in front of the Barter Fountain on Main St. and noon on Remsburg Drive in front of the Abingdon Farmers Market. All skill levels, shapes, sizes, and ages are welcome!
- Writers' Day: Spark your creativity and release the stories inside you at Writers' Day on Friday, July 28 beginning at 8 a.m. A full day of workshops in everything from poetry to prose to playwriting wraps up with *An Evening of Words and Music*. Hear readings by the instructors, with musical accompaniment by Wyatt Rice and Claiborne Woodall.
- Storybook Evolution: Get your kids reading-ready for the school year at the Youth tent with Highlands Educational Literacy Program (HELP) and the United Way Smart Beginnings program. Kids will learn how to use words and pictures to create their own storybook. Completed books will be eligible for prizes, but everyone wins when they fall in love with reading! Workshop days are Monday July 31, Wednesday August 2, and Friday August 4.
- Live Music: This year's music lineup will definitely have you kicking up your heels!
 - Friday, July 28 - Phantom
 - Saturday, July 29 - Celtic Day with the Appalachian Highlanders, Tempest, Tuatha Dea, and a special reunion performance of Coyote Run
 - Sunday, July 30 - Crooked Road Day with Gravel Road, The Yates Family, Hollow Ground, and Tune Town
 - Tuesday, August 1 - Carson Peters & Iron Mountain with The Honey Badgers
 - Thursday, August 3 - Virginia Ground with C2 and the Brothers Reed
 - Friday, August 4 - Acoustic Music Afternoon with Robin & Will, Larry Mangum, and The Brother Boys
 - Saturday, August 5 - Vegas McGraw: A Tim McGraw tribute show
 - Sunday, August 6 - Classical Music Sunday with the Johnson City Symphony Quartet
- Day in Damascus: Explore beyond Abingdon into the neighboring town of Damascus. Take a walking tour, snorkel in Whitetop-Laurel Creek, and wrap up your day back in Abingdon with "Tales of the Trail" (stories from thru-hikers on the Appalachian Trail).

- Juried Fine Art, Photography, and Youth Art competitions: Feeling artsy? Submit your work to one of our art competitions. You may win prize money, print recognition, and the opportunity to sell your work to local collectors. In-take days are July 15 and 16 from 1-5 p.m. at the William King Museum of Art for the Photography competition, July 22 and 23 from 2-5 p.m. at the Arts Depot for Juried Fine Art, and July 23 from 2-4 p.m. at the William King Museum of Art for Youth Art.
- Circus Arts: The circus comes to the Festival this year with our new partnership with Night Owl Circus Arts. Shows are Sunday, July 30 and Monday, July 31 at Emory & Henry College's beautiful McGlothlin Arts Center. Night Owl Circus and One World Circus will also offer lessons and street performances throughout the Festival.

These are just a few of the 200-plus events that make up this year's Festival! For more information about all Festival events, pick up a *Highlander* program guide or visit the Festival's website at www.VaHighlandsFestival.org.

About the Virginia Highlands Festival: Founded in 1948, the Virginia Highlands Festival is an annual, 10-day event devoted to the celebration of Southwest Virginian heritage and rich Appalachian tradition. Held in historic Abingdon, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Festival attracts about 200,000 visitors each year. The Festival was selected as the "Best Art Event" by the readers of *Virginia Living* magazine in 2016 (fifth year in a row), recognized as a Top 20 Event by the Southeastern Tourism Society and has been consistently named as one of the American Bus Association's Top 100 Tourist Attractions over the past four decades. In 2017, the 69th Virginia Highlands Festival will run from July 28-Aug. 6 (Antiques Market opens Saturday, July 29) and feature live concerts, a juried arts and crafts show, and an antique market, as well as workshops, lectures and tours. To learn more about the Virginia Highlands Festival and this year's events, please visit <http://www.vahighlandsfestival.org/>