



ARTS
FESTIVAL

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Cynthia Hardy 803-447-3770
info@onpointwithcynthia.com

Using The Arts To Unite

Upcoming Festival Seeks To Bring Together Diverse Groups For Empowerment

Sumter, SC....When Melanie Colclough was named executive director at the Sumter County Cultural Center a few months ago, she was excited about creating new opportunities to bring diverse groups of people together using the arts as a vehicle. "We often get into a routine of existing day to day in silos, without meaningfully engaging with people who are different," says Colclough. "We have the rare opportunity to unite people around the Sumter area's rich culture and the diversity of the arts", concludes Colclough.

With that in mind, the Sumter County Cultural Commission is partnering with the Millican Foundation to present the Love. Respect. Unity. Festival (LRU)—a two-day multicultural event, March 10-11 at Patriot Hall (135 Haynsworth Street, Sumter, SC 29150). South Carolina Poet Laureate Marjory Wentworth and Alana Simmons will headline the event. Simmons founded the nonprofit *Hate Won't Win* after her grandfather was murdered at "Mother" Emanuel AME in June 2015.

The popular Air Force Rhythm in Blues Band will be among the exciting performers. Other highlights include a combined 'unity' choir (including Morris College Choir, Lakewood High and the Sumter County Civic Chorale); a performance by Charleston's first Poet Laureate, Marcus Amaker; an art exhibit; and performances by a host of local and SC talent. Media personality Cynthia Hardy will emcee the 2-day festival. The event is FREE to the public.

"Many of the performances are inspired by the works of civil rights icon C. T. Vivian and feature themes of togetherness, cooperation, and unity, says Millican Foundation Executive Director Richard (Rick) Jones. "What I'm most excited and passionate about is the impact the festival and ongoing LRU programing will have in bringing our diverse and multi-cultural community together through the arts, concludes Jones.

If you are interested in donating to the event or for more information, call Sumter County Cultural Center at (803) 436-2260, visit PatriotHallSC.org/LRU or email PatriotHall@sumtercountysc.org.

###



MARJORY WENTWORTH is the Poet Laureate of South Carolina. Her poems have been nominated for prestigious The Pushcart Prize five times. She's on the faculty at The Art Institute of Charleston; and is the poetry editor for *Charleston Currents*. Her work is included in the South Carolina Poetry Archives at Furman University. Marjory Wentworth is a recent recipient of a Coretta Scott King Book Award. "Out of Wonder: Poems Celebrating Poets," illustrated by Ekua Holmes, is the King Illustrator Award winner. The book is written by Kwame Alexander with Chris Colderly and Marjory Wentworth and published by Candlewick Press. She is a 2018 recipient of the Coretta Scott King Social Justice Award.



ALANA SIMMONS launched her national non-profit Hate Won't Win in honor of her grandfather Reverend Daniel Simmons and 8 others murdered by Dylan Roof at Emanuel AME Church in June 2015. "Hate Won't Win" are the words she used to address shooting suspect Dylann Roof at his June 19 bond hearing. They are the words embraced by the Charleston community as its mantra. Simmons takes her uplifting message to communities around the country, spreading love and encouraging cooperative efforts among diverse audiences. She is often an invited guest on national media discussing racial cooperation.



AIR FORCE RHYTHM IN BLUE JAZZ ENSEMBLE

The Rhythm in Blue ensemble's mission is to communicate the Air Force core values, tell the Air Force story, instill patriotism in audiences across the world and foster and sustain the welfare and morale of service members. They provide live musical support for approximately 300-plus events annually, and have produced more than 55 critically-acclaimed compact disc recordings. The ensemble has received numerous military awards to include eight Air Force Outstanding Unit awards, five Air Force Organizational Excellence awards and three Colonel George S. Howard Citations of Musical Excellence for Military Concert Bands awards.



SUMTER COUNTY CULTURAL CENTER AND THE CULTURAL COMMISSION

The Sumter County Cultural Center offers Sumter residents a place to experience creative and diverse cultural opportunities. Home to the Sumter Gallery of Art, Sumter Little Theatre, Patriot Hall, Sumter Community Concert Band, Sumter Civic Chorale, and the Sumter Community Jazz Band—the historic building and its offerings are unique treasures for the community. People from all backgrounds come together to present plays, experience art, and enjoy shows and performances spanning the spectrum. The Sumter County Cultural Commission (SCCC) was created by a city/county ordinance in 1974. Comprised of community volunteers dedicated to bringing people together through the arts, SCCC also finds innovative ways to support arts-related endeavors in Sumter County.

ARTHENIA JACKSON BATES MILLICAN FOUNDATION

The AJBM Foundation was established in 2008 to preserve the legacy and literary works of Dr. Arthenia Jackson Bates Millican and to give back. Dr. Millican (1920 – 2012) was an internationally known poet, educator, novelist and humanist of rural beginnings who called Sumter, South Carolina home. A focal point of the Foundation's contributions is to promote literary and cultural arts locally, nationally and globally.

Dr. Arthenia Jackson Bates Millican

