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NEWS RELEASE

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MUSICFEST FILLS SUMMERTIME WITH SONG

The Arts Council of Gainesville's outdoor Summer MusicFest will feature everything from the familiar party music of the popular Swingin' Medallions to a new local group that plays oldies from the 1960s and '70s to the rich and relaxing classical tones of the world renowned Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.

All will perform on The Arts Council's Smithgall Arts Center outdoor lawn at the end of West Spring Street in downtown Gainesville. Hundreds come to the concerts bearing lawn chairs or blankets to sit on and picnic baskets. Many reserve and decorate elaborate tables to dine and listen to the music.

"The Arts Council's Summer Series has been a favorite of ours since we moved to Northeast Georgia 12 years ago," said Angela Sparks of Gainesville. "We get a table and decorate it with candles, flowers and whatever else fits the mood of the performance. We fill it with friends who all bring food and drink, and we have a wonderful summer evening under the Gainesville skies.

"We always go early enough to walk around and see who's there, stop and chat, meet new people, and generally enjoy ourselves," she said. "When we lived in Atlanta we went to Chastain Park, but I can tell you this is better, much more intimate, and much less expensive."

Up first this year are the Swingin' Medallions at 8 p.m. June 4. The group based in nearby Greenwood, S.C., has toured nationwide since the early 1960s. It plays beach music, frat rock, rhythm and blues or shaggin' music. It's most familiar and popular recording "Double Shot (of My Baby's Love)" became a million seller in 1966 and continues to be a party classic for college students, present and past.

"We started playing 'Double Shot' in 1965, and the college kids loved it," said original drummer Joe Morris in a recent interview. They recorded it a few months later, and it rose rapidly on the

Leader John McElrath is the only original performing member of The Swingin' Medallions. The musicians have changed over the years, but the high-energy music and performances remain the same.

The show the group puts on earned it the nickname "The Party Band of the South."

Back in Time Band is the second MusicFest event at 8 p.m. June 25. Its leader is Mercer Crook, former longtime band director at East Hall High School, who has assembled a group that specializes in hits from the 1960s and .70s. Arrangements are authentic to the original artists, Crook said. For instance, they do "My Girl" by The Temptations and "Desperado" by The Eagles.

Crook's two sons, Michael and Rory, play in the band, along with two of his college classmates, John Harriman and Glenn Brown. Chuck McKissick is the popular local drummer.

Crook is coming back from a serious traffic accident that resulted in months-long hospital stays and surgeries. It delayed plans for his band, which began playing last fall, but has had several performances leading up to Summer MusicFest.

The final in the MusicFest series is the annual performance of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, making its 35th appearance in Gainesville at 8 p.m. July 30.

The Symphony is known internationally, touring in such cities as Paris, London and Vienna. Its director is Robert Spano and principal guest conductor Donald Runnicles. It has a reputation for attracting directors who each has taken the orchestra to new heights. These included the famous Henry Sopkin, Robert Shaw and Yoel Levi.

The performance in Gainesville will be one of more than 200 the orchestra does annually. It has been reaching outside Atlanta to other communities around the state for more than three decades, but Gainesville is only one of two to be hosts to the full orchestra.

At each of the Summer MusicFest concerts, gates will open at 6 p.m. Tickets for The Swingin' Medallions are \$25 or \$240 for a table of eight. Back in Time tickets are \$20 for non-members or \$200 for a table of eight. The Atlanta Symphony tickets are \$35 for adults, \$32 for seniors, \$28 for students and children and \$320 for a table of eight. Rain date for the Symphony is Aug. 1.

Information is available at (770) 534-2787 or www.theartscouncil.net.

2010 SUMMER MUSICFEST

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From Atlanta: Take I-85 north to Exit 113 bearing left onto I-985 north to Exit 20 GA Highway 60 (Queen City Pkwy/Candler Rd). Turn left onto GA 60 and proceed approximately 2 miles to intersection with GA Hwy 369 (Jesse Jewell Pkwy), turn right onto GA 369 and proceed approximately 1/2 mile to intersection with W. Academy St (poultry monument/railroad museum on left, BB&T on right) turn left onto W. Academy and proceed 2 blocks and the Arts Council *Smithgall Arts Center* will be on the right at the intersection of W. Academy and Spring Streets