Syd Blackmarr Selected for Governor’s Award in Arts

Thirty-nine years after she founded the Arts Experiment Station at ABAC, Syd Blackmarr from Tifton is still proudly carrying the banner for the advancement of the arts in Georgia. And Governor Nathan Deal appreciates that fact.

Deal recently named Blackmarr as one of 13 recipients of the 2014 Governor’s Awards for the Arts and Humanities. The awards were presented in partnership with the Georgia Council for the Arts and the Georgia Humanities Council.

“Georgia’s arts and humanities sectors propel our state forward by improving quality of life for the citizens and businesses of our state,” Deal said.

“The individuals and organizations honored here today are committed to growing and sustaining Georgia’s vibrant culture and history, and I am grateful for their significant contributions to our state.”

Deal said the award recipients represent a diverse group of individuals and organizations that have laid the groundwork for Georgia’s growing creative industry through innovative programs, community collaboration and long term financial commitment.

Other recipients included Leslie Gordon from Atlanta, Fred and Dinah Gretsch from Savannah, Paul Hudson from Clarkston, Carl Purdy from Atlanta, Douglas Scott from Atlanta, The Activities Council of Thomson, the Atlanta Ballet in Atlanta, Brenau University in Gainesville, the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, the Freedom Singers from Albany, Meridian Herald from Atlanta, and the Richard B. Russell Library of Political Research and Studies in Athens.

ABAC Arts Connection Director Wayne Jones said Blackmarr was hired in 1976 to found the Arts Experiment Station, whose purpose was to direct a year-long study funded by the National Endowment for the Arts to focus on the cultural assets and needs of South Georgia communities.

Blackmarr used that study as springboard to develop a unique rural arts partnership that created arts councils in the counties of Ben Hill, Colquitt, Irwin, Cook, Berrien, Tift, Turner, and Worth. She linked them together as the South Georgia Arts Alliance, Georgia’s first...
and only rural arts consortium.

Enlisting the support of a legion of volunteers, **Blackmarr** built a multi-county Arts and Entertainment Series that reached 7,400 people annually from 29 communities. She also created South Georgia’s first Arts in Black festival and the first fine arts festival, the Love Affair in Tifton. Blackmarr also initiated the project that led to the La Fiesta Del Pueblo Hispanic Festival.

“Her absolute insistence on bringing the highest standards for cultural programming to the area has permanently raised an expectation for quality arts as a part of daily life,” Jones said. “In that regard, her work has transformed the cultural landscape of an entire region within our state.”

Blackmarr retired from ABAC in 1999 but has continued to support the arts through the Tifton Museum of Arts and Heritage and other venues.

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**Open Enrollment Information Sessions Begin Oct. 27**

All sessions will be held on the first floor of Herring Hall in the conference room.

- Monday, Oct. 27: 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, Oct. 29: 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m.
- Tuesday, Nov. 4: 8:30 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m.
- Thursday, Nov. 6: 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m.
- Friday, Nov. 7: 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m.

Open enrollment benefits information sessions for 2015 begin on Oct. 27 and conclude on Nov. 16.

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**FLU SHOTS AVAILABLE IN THE HEALTH CENTER**

The Student Health Center is still offering flu shots. Under the ACA, all preventive type visits are covered at 100%. If you would like the vaccine but do not have insurance, the cost is $15.00. Please bring your insurance card or a copy (front and back) with you.

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**A-Maze-ing Zombie Run, Trick-or-Treat This Saturday at Museum**

Guys, girls, and ghouls of every age can come out to the Georgia Museum of Agriculture at ABAC on Saturday for the third annual A-Maze-ing Zombie Run. Kids can hang around for Trick-or-Treat in the Village. A Fun Run/Walk will be held in the morning and a Zombie Trail Run that night. Zombies will be along the designated path to spur on the runners.

Each race will take participants through the Historic Village and Crop Maze, shaped like a blue ribbon. Registration begins at 8 a.m. for the morning race with a race time of 9 a.m. It begins at the Country Store parking lot.

Morning runners and their families are welcome to stay for the Trick-or-Treat in the Village Celebration from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Candy will be given to children at various locations in the Village. Museum employees invite children to don their favorite costume and participate in costume contests at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

The Museum Crone will share spooky stories for guests to enjoy. Activities include face painting, a monster spider web for climbing, apple bobbing, a cupcake walk, rope making, and witches brew. Visitors can also purchase pumpkins at the Museum’s pumpkin patch and wander through the blue ribbon-shaped crop maze.

The pumpkin patch and crop maze will be open Tuesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. The pumpkin patch is located at the Country Store near the entrance to the Museum.

The Saturday evening Zombie Trail Run begins at the Country Store parking lot with registration at 5:30 p.m. It ends at the Opry Shelter where participants will be treated to a hayride returning them to the Country Store parking lot for pizza and soda.

The registration fee for the Fun Run/Walk is $20 each for adults and children. The registration fee for the Zombie Trail Run is $30 each for adults and children. All participants in either run will receive an event t-shirt contingent upon the date of registration. Special zombie awards, such as best scream, will also be given out. Children under 12 who participate in the morning race must be accompanied by an adult. Children who are easily frightened should not participate.

The evening race is for participants 14 years old and up. Headlight gear is encouraged, and no hand-held flashlights will be permitted for the evening race. Entry forms are available online at www.abac.edu/museum/events.

For more information on the A-Maze-ing Zombie Run, interested persons can contact Tonia Carpenter at (229) 391-5205 or by e-mail at tcarpenter@abac.edu.

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**Skillsoft Training Sessions to be Held Tuesday and Thursday**

ABAC recently acquired Skillsoft, an on-line ELearning resource for all full time faculty and staff employees. The ELearning resource contains a vast array of over 3,000 on-line courses and more than 20,000 books. Skillsoft matches your learning needs with extensive and current online assets, delivers the full text of thousands of leading professional books, via Skillsoft Books 24x7® and engages learners with interactive courses, enlightening videos and practical simulations.

Thirty-minute voluntary employee training sessions will be held in the conference room on the first floor of Herring Hall Tuesday at 4 p.m., and Thursday at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Additional training sessions can be added based upon your need. Employee login and password information will be forwarded at the end of next week to all full time employees.
Dr. Jordan Cofer, associate professor of English and head of the Department of Literature and Languages at ABAC, will present a symposium, “The Gospel According to Flannery O’Connor: Examining the Role of the Bible in Flannery O’Connor’s Fiction,” just prior to attending the NEH workshop.

Cofer joined the ABAC faculty in 2009. He earned his B.A. in English at Southwest Baptist University, his M.A. in English from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and his Ph.D. in English from Texas Tech University. At ABAC, he has served as an advisor for student clubs including the Rural Studies Club and the Reading Club. Cofer has also hosted a radio show, worked with the college’s student newspaper, “The Stallion,” and served as the Director of the Writing Center.

Cofer will be joined in this symposium by Dr. Bruce Gentry, professor of English in the Department of English and Rhetoric at GCSU. Gentry earned English degrees from the University of Arkansas and the University of Chicago. He then attended the University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his Ph.D. After 18 years at the University of Indianapolis, where he served as chair of the English Department, Gentry joined the GCSU faculty. He was the editor of the “Flannery O’Connor Review” in 2003.

Gentry is the author of the book-length study, “Flannery O’Connor’s Religion of the Grotesque,” published by the University Press of Mississippi. He is the editor of “The Cartoons of Flannery O’Connor” at GCSU and co-editor of “At Home with Flannery O’Connor: An Oral History.” In 2007, Gentry was co-director with John D. Cox for “Reconsidering Flannery O’Connor,” a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for College and University Teachers that brought 24 college professors to Milledgeville for a month of studying O’Connor’s works. Gentry also co-directed O’Connor conferences in Milledgeville in 2006, 2008, and 2011.