Word-weaving in Tennessee: The National Storytelling Festival

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appalachia is a storied land. Every place within the region has its own story, and virtually every person who has spent a significant amount of time in a specific Appalachian place has been affected by—indeed, has become part of—that story. The region’s artists have learned to interpret those stories through their preferred creative medium—whether visual art, music, craft, writing, or the spoken word.

This section of Appalachia—Asheville and many nearby communities in the North Carolina Blue Ridge—is a hotbed of art and artists, and each art-form is showcased hereabouts in specialized venues.

Visual art can be seen in galleries and museums; music can be heard in clubs, concert halls, and music festivals; crafts can be witnessed at fairs and stores, among other sites; and the written word—as literature—can be savored in bookstores and lecture halls. The spoken word—in the form of storytelling—is one of the more difficult art-forms to present in formal settings.

Historically across Appalachia, people savored storytelling by the fireside or on the front porch. Today, in the wake of the storytelling revival, stories can be heard at a range of organized events, and certainly at the National Storytelling Festival, which has been held every October since 1973 just across the border mountains from Asheville in Tennessee’s oldest town: Jonesborough.

Several Appalachian masters of the spoken word will be in Jonesborough on October 5-7 to headline the 40th Anniversary of the Festival. People who can be there that weekend will be privileged to hear the magical word-weaving of several Appalachia-based storytellers, including Donald Davis, Connie Regan-Blake, Bil

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IF YOU GO: 40th Annual National Storytelling Festival, October 5-7, 2012 in historic Jonesborough, Tennessee. More details are available online; visit www.storytellingcenter.net/festival

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Ted Olson is the author of such books as Breathing in Darkness: Poems (Wind Publications, 2006) and Blue Ridge Folklore (University Press of Mississippi, 1998). He is the editor of numerous books, including the runs Remember: The Complete Short Stories of James Still (University Press of Kentucky, 2012). Olson’s newest collection of poetry, Revelations: Poems, will be available in October 2012. His experiences as a poet and musician are discussed on www.windpub.com/books/breathingindarkness.htm

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Asheville Flyer Takes Off

While there is no shortage of free publications in our area (with Rapid River Magazine being our own favorite) artist/entrepreneur Tim Arem noticed a decided lack of activities and publications aimed specifically at children. In response to this void, Arem, who was the driving force behind this summer’s successful Fathers Day Festival, is launching The Asheville Flyer for Kids.

A free monthly newspaper, The Asheville Flyer will feature announce-ments of upcoming events, links to web sites, puzzles, safety tips, and other articles relevant to kids. According to Arem the package will be “chock full of games, jokes, and activities, strictly for kids, all with a sense of humor. Our motto is “Puzzles & pictures & stuff to read, while your parents do something completely boring.”

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The Asheville Flyer for Kids visit www.cheesygraphics.com/afk.