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2016 DICKENS ON THE STRAND RETURNS DECEMBER 2, 3 & 4 TO HISTORIC GALVESTON ISLAND

Galveston Island, Texas, October 3, 2016 – Make history at Galveston's world-famous Victorian holiday festival, Dickens on The Strand! Held December 2, 3 & 4, the 43rd annual festival is a holiday tradition with great family programming, including newly created events specifically for youth. This year's festival begins Friday, December 2 with free admission to Fezziwig's Beer Hall from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and continues with ticketed admission Saturday, December 3, from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday, December 4, from 12 to 6 p.m. Tickets purchased before December 2 are \$13 for adults and \$7 for children ages 7-12. Tickets purchased at the gate are \$15 for adults and \$9 for youth. Discounted tickets for GHF members are available for \$10 in advance or \$12 at the gate. Tickets are available online at www.dickensonthestrand.org, by calling, 409-765-7834 or at all area Randall's stores beginning November 6. Attendees in Victorian costume are admitted for \$8.

"Each year Dickens on The Strand brings a festive spirit to the beginnings of our holidays," states GHF Executive Director, Dwayne Jones. "Now for more than forty years, Dickens enlivens the streets and introduces thousands of visitors to the ambiance of the Victorian era. Children and adults alike can retreat back to the day of Charles Dickens and the early decades of historic Galveston. It remains one of the magical experiences in our area and in Texas."

The annual holiday street festival, based on 19th-century Victorian London, features parades, non-stop entertainment on seven stages, strolling carolers, roving musicians, bagpipers, jugglers and a host of other entertainers. Costumed vendors peddle their wares from street stalls and rolling carts laden with holiday food and drink, Victorian-inspired crafts, clothing, jewelry, holiday decorations and gift items.

Two descendants of Charles Dickens will once again grace the festival as GHF welcomes Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, great-great-great-granddaughter of Dickens, and Jane Dickens Monk, great-great-granddaughter. Both women will be at numerous events throughout the weekend.

"Spending the first weekend of December in Texas has become the highlight of my Dickensian calendar! I'm really looking forward to returning to Dickens on the Strand this year and to seeing all the familiar faces and meeting friends again," says Lucinda Dickens Hawksley. "I have really enjoyed seeing how much the festival has expanded in recent years and to taking part in so many events. I am looking forward to working on children's events again this year, as well as to the parades and book signings. If you're coming to Galveston this December, come and say hello to me and my cousin Jane Dickens Monk."

Jane Dickens Monk continues, "This is my fifth year at Dickens on The Strand and I'm just as excited about it as the first time I attended. There always seems to be new events to see and do, as well as the ones that everyone loves, like the fantastic parades which I'm always thrilled to be part of. Coming from the UK, I always keep my fingers crossed for some wonderful Texas weather for the weekend of Dickens. I look forward to seeing everyone there."

NEW IN 2016

A Grand Strand Soiree

Featuring specialty acts, award winning performers and a carefully curated food and drink menu, this new kickoff to the annual festival is not to be missed! Held in Hendley Green on Friday evening, December 2, attendees will enjoy live music by Houston's Two Star Symphony, a special aerial acrobatic performance by Cirque La Vie, and appearances by Lucinda Dickens Hawksley, James Beard award winning author Robb Walsh and noted cocktail historian Elizabeth Pearce. Tickets are \$75 and reservations are required.

Breakfast with Dickens

The great-great-granddaughter of Charles Dickens, Jane Monk, isn't just coming to this year's event to take in the sights and share her heritage, she's also there to cook a traditional English breakfast! Join Jane and Chef Mary Bass, Food Network's Cutthroat Kitchen runner up, at the beautiful 1859 Ashton Villa on Saturday, December 3 or Sunday, December 4. Tickets are \$60 and reservations are required.

Complimentary Book and Dickens Writing Workshop

Dickens descendant Lucinda Dickens Hawksley will lead a special writing workshop, "What It Was Like to be a Child in Dickens' Time", each day of the festival for youth ages 8 and up. Also, through a special grant by the Alice Taylor Gray Foundation, the first 3,000 youth that enter the festival grounds will receive a special print edition of Charles Dickens' 1838 "Oliver Twist".

Dickens Costume Contest

What fun is a Dickens festival if you don't have the characters? This new addition to the wildly popular costume contests puts the focus squarely on the beloved characters from Dickens' literary works. Held on Sunday, December 4 at 3 p.m., registrations will be open for individual and family costumes. Registration is \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families and interested competitors can sign up at the costume contest booth.

Exclusive Book Releases

Both visiting Dickens descendants, Lucinda Dickens Hawksley and Jane Dickens Monk, will be arriving with the premier of their new books. Special book signings will be held both days of the festival.

Charles Dickens and his Circle - Historian and writer Lucinda Hawksley explores the life of her great-great-great-grandfather, Charles Dickens – one of the first people to whom the term 'celebrity' in its modern sense was applied, and whose extensive circle of friends and associates embraced many of the most eminent and influential figures of the Victorian age.

My Life: Cedric Charles Dickens - Dickens' great-great-granddaughter, Jane Dickens Monk, painstaking work in collecting and finishing her father's, Cedric, personal memoirs receives its welcome in "My Life." Hear about the amazing life of Dickens' great-grandson through his own words and personal photos.

EXPANDED OFFERINGS

Fezziwig's Friday Night

Mr. Fezziwig was everything Ebenezer wasn't and we pay tribute to his jovial personality at our Fezziwig's Beer Hall. Join us Friday evening, December 2 from 5 to 9 p.m. for specialty acts, hearty brews and new friends all hosted by Dickens descendant Jane Monk. There will also be a specialty cocktail chosen from Cedric Dickens' book *Drinking With Dickens*. Admission is free for this lively start to the 43rd anniversary.

Dickens Children's Writing Contest

Could you be the next Dickens? This year's festival will give you the chance to ride in a carriage with both of our Dickens descendants if your story is the winning selection! Lucinda Dickens Hawksley will personally select two stories, one from a 7-9 age range and one from a 10-12 range, for the winner to accompany them as their special guest during a Dickens parade. Stories are limited to 100 words and can be on one of three topics. Details and submissions can be found at www.dickensonthestrand.org.

Oliver's Alley Children's Area

Children by the thousands come each year for the parades, petting zoo and more. This year's event will feature an expanded Oliver's Alley children's area, presented by the Galveston Children's Museum, where specialty programs and events will be scheduled all weekend long.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

The festival weekend also hosts a multitude of spirited fun with events such as the crowd favorite Whimsical Whisker Revue, a facial hair contest for the bearded and the dandy; the Dickens Victorian Bed Races; Victorian Costume Contest and daily parades through Galveston's National Historic Landmark Strand District. In addition, special events are planned for all days of the event, including:

Salute To Sunset onboard the 1877 Tall Ship ELISSA

The Texas Seaport Museum transforms to a London wharf for this toast to the end of the day and beginning of the evening. The Tall Ship ELISSA welcomes you aboard Saturday, December 3 at 4:30 p.m. for heavy appetizers, cocktails, cannon fire and special guests leading up to Saturday night's Pickwick's Lanternlight Parade. Tickets are \$50 per person and reservations are required.

Holiday Handbell Concerts

The 1859 St. Joseph's Church, the state's first wooden built church, well known for its exceptional acoustics, hosts three holiday hand bell concert on Friday, December 2 at 5:30, 7 and 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 per person and reservations are required.

Saint Arnold's Strand Walking Tours

Learn about the history of The Strand and enjoy some of Saint Arnold Brewing Company's signature ales during this new tour. Held twice a day during Dickens on The Strand, you'll visit three festival pubs as you walk through the National Historic Landmark district with your guide. Tickets are \$35 per person and include three complimentary beers. Advanced registration encouraged.

For more information on Dickens on The Strand, Galveston Historical Foundation, or to purchase advance tickets, please visit galvestonhistory.org or call 409-765-7834. For more festival information,

please contact Will Wright, Director of Communications and Special Events at 409-765-3404 or will.wright@galvestonhistory.org.