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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Marvin Downer Receives 2014 Roland Walls Lifetime Achievement Award

Fort Payne: Roland Walls was more than the morning man at WZOB radio, he belonged to all of DeKalb County, had a heart of gold and a wonderful humor and wit. Roland served The DeKalb County Fiddlers Convention as host and M.C. since its revival in the 1990's by the Big Wills Arts Council (BWAC) and continued to do so until his untimely death in 2011. He was a man that truly loved traditional music whether it is Southern Gospel or Ol' Time Music and Bluegrass. He supported all of the BWAC efforts to preserve, present, and encourage an on-going participation in local heritage and traditions. It was in his memory that in 2011 the Big Wills Arts Council initiated **The Roland Walls Lifetime Achievement Award** with the first presentation to master fiddler, Mr. William E. "Gene" Ivey.

The organizers of the DeKalb County Fiddlers Convention are proud to announce the recipient of this year's award to be presented at the 106th Anniversary gathering set for June 7th, 2014. The recipient is Mr. Marvin Downer, lifelong resident of DeKalb County and master Bluegrass Musician known for his chart topping recordings with the Sand Mountain Playboys, and for leading his own group, Marvin Downer and the Bluegrass Four for over four decades. A multi-instrumentalist, Downer is best known for his first love, the mandolin, and has served as the inspiration and mentor to some of the area's most successful musicians.

Downer, who started performing in the 1950's, entertained the troops while stationed in Korea with the 301st Signal Battalion and continues to perform today with some of the best musicians to come out of North East Alabama.

“I wouldn’t be playing today if it weren’t for Marvin Downer” states master fiddler James Bryan, who studied at the age of 16 with Downer.

“I’d like to thank all of the volunteers and sponsors that have come forward to help us again this year with the fiddlers’ convention,” said Russell Gulley, Director of the Big Wills Arts Council. “Without that support, we could not continue to present this major traditional event yearly. The heritage is one that deserves all of our support and celebration. By honoring these folks such as Marvin Downer, we are recognizing that wonderful heritage that we enjoy through our music here in DeKalb County and I hope that folks will attend the convention and see for themselves.”

For more information, Contact the Big Wills Arts Council at 256-845-2224 or e-mail the director at bwac@russellgulley.com. Join the convention on FaceBook at www.facebook.com/DeKalbCountyFiddlersConvention or www.russellgulleymusic.com/dekalbfiddlersconvention.