

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

RUTGERS

New Jersey Folk Festival – Department of American Studies
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For immediate release

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FESTIVAL HONORS OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADERS

Jean Ritchie the “Mother of Folk” will be honored with the *Lifetime Achievement Award* at the 35th annual New Jersey Folk Festival on Saturday, April 25, 2009. The ceremony, which also acknowledges Harriet Davidson and Elizabeth Hance, will take place on the festival’s Skylands Stage during the event, which is free of admission and held from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. on the lawn of the Eagleton Institute. The lawn is located at George Street and Ryders Lane, on the Douglass Campus of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. This year’s heritage theme celebrates 35 years of the New Jersey Folk Festival’s favorite heritages and traditions.

Ritchie, an accomplished dulcimer player and singer-songwriter will receive the award in honor of her contributions to the local and national music scene. After graduating from high school in Viper, Kentucky Ritchie attended Cumberland Junior College in Williamsburg, Kentucky. She then went to the University of Kentucky, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1946. With a bachelor’s degree in social work in hand, she moved to New York City to work at the Henry Street Settlement. There she drew on her knowledge of family songs to entertain the children in her charge.

Gradually, Ritchie’s reputation as a folk singer grew. For folk music fans of the 1940s, Ritchie represented the ideal traditional performer: She grew up in the mountains of Kentucky, sang songs that she learned from her family, and played a little-known instrument called a dulcimer. Ritchie has maintained an active performance schedule ever since. She has played and sung on radio and television, in concerts, and at folk festivals and hootenannies in the U.S. and abroad. When Ritchie’s album *None But One* won the Rolling Stone Critics’ Award in 1977, her acceptance into the popular mainstream was secured.

The festival is also honored to announce Harriet Davidson, Interim Dean of Douglass Residential College and Douglass Campus as the 2009 *Honorary Chair*. A tenured member of the Rutgers University School of Arts and Sciences Departments of English, Women’s and Gender Studies and of the Program in Comparative Literature, Professor Davidson is a widely recognized scholar-critic working in literary modernism, contemporary poetry, and feminist theory. A celebrated teacher, she has also been one of the most active members of the university community, especially for the Departments of English, Women’s

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Studies, and Douglass College. Her teaching has earned her Rutgers' top awards: the Warren Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Graduate School Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching. Professor Davidson has also been an inexhaustible campus leader, serving on numerous University and Douglass committees and most recently directing the Department of English's undergraduate Honors Program.

Elizabeth E. Hance, President and Chief Executive Officer of Magyar Bank, is being honored as the 2009 *Grand Marshall*. Ms. Hance first started with Magyar as a summer intern, and it was during this opportunity that she developed a passion for community banking that is still very evident in her today. Over the years, Ms. Hance held numerous positions at the Bank and has served as the Bank's President & Chief Executive Officer since January 2005, overseeing the Bank's initial public offering in January 2006.

Ms. Hance's passion for community banking extends far beyond her professional accomplishments. Today, she is affiliated with numerous organizations that share her same commitment to the communities where she works and lives. Ms. Hance is on the Board of Trustees of the Children's Specialized Hospital, United Way of Central Jersey ('UWCJ'), the State Theatre, American Hungarian Foundation, and New Brunswick Tomorrow. She also serves on numerous committees for each of these organizations, and is presently serving as the UWCJ's Treasurer. Currently, Ms. Hance also serves as Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of Middlesex County's Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

In addition to these awards there are four stages of music, dance, workshops, and a wide array of American and ethnic food vendors. The festival offers a diverse craft market of approximately 75 booths, craft demonstrators, and a folk marketplace - where performer CDs and information on area folk organizations are available. For children, there is a designated activities area with games, a clown, and crafts to make and take.

The New Jersey Folk Festival is the oldest and largest continuously-held festival of its kind in the state. Wheelchair accessible, it offers selected programs with ASL interpretation; large-print program books and audio assists are also available.

The 2009 New Jersey Folk Festival is presented by Rutgers University and Douglass Residential College. It is sponsored in part by the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission. Additional sponsorship is provided by The Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs of Rutgers, Picture-It Awards, Inc., the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, the City of New Brunswick Department of Parks. The festival is produced by the Department of American Studies at Rutgers, the State University, under the technical direction of Angus K. Gillespie and Erin Clarke.

The New Jersey Folk Festival is proud to be a key component of Rutgers Day, a day of learning, exploration, and fun at New Jersey's State University. The Folk Festival is the main attraction of Rutgers Day on the Douglass Campus, but visitors are encouraged to check out the many workshops and live performances at the other Rutgers campuses throughout the day - all designed to demonstrate the impact and value of our world-class university. Admission, parking, and on-campus bus shuttles are all free. For

further details, including stage schedules and directions, visit the web at <http://njfolkfest.rutgers.edu> or call the festival office at (732)-932-5775 or Rutgers Campus Info Services at (732)-445-INFO.