

Folk Festival Lineup Includes Judy Collins

By Scott Smith

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The music and personality of one singer, songwriter, radio personality and activist will come alive during the 11th annual Woody Guthrie Folk Festival July 9-13 in downtown Okemah, Okla.

Each night, about 5,000 people are expected to attend the event, which honors the musical and social influence of Okemah native Woody Guthrie, and will culminate in a concert by Judy Collins, said Karen Zundel, media chairwoman for the festival.

“It’s amazing, all the artists who donate their time for this event,” Zundel said. “We have Judy Collins there this year, and there will be Lefty Lou, who was Woody Guthrie’s partner on radio. Lefty has to be in her 90s now — they were on the air in the 1930s — and we are so excited to have her and everyone else participate.”

Daily highlights will include live music, open-mic sessions, poetry and a children’s festival, which will pay tribute to Guthrie, who died in 1967, she said. The children’s festival will include crafts, buggy rides, face painting and other attractions.

“Everything is centrally located in the downtown area, and you can walk a few blocks to reach everything,” Zundel said.

“Woody Guthrie recorded some music for kids and released a couple albums for kids, so we are having four performers for kids during the children’s festival on July 11 and July 12,” Zundel said. “And we’re excited that Ellis Paul, one of our main-stage headliners, will also perform at the children’s festival.”

A pre-festival concert will pay tribute to the late Bob Childers, the “Godfather of Red Dirt Music” and a central part of the folk festival, at 7 p.m. July 8 at Cain’s Ballroom, 423 N. Main St. in Tulsa, Zundel said. Tickets for the show, which features Jimmy LaFave, The Red Dirt Rangers, The Burns Sisters, Joel Rafael, Tom Skinner, Stoney LaRue and Jason Boland, among others, are \$25 and \$40.

Country Joe McDonald will perform his “Tribute to Woody Guthrie: A One-Man, Two-Act Musical Play,” at 8 p.m. July 9 at the Crystal Theatre in downtown Okemah, she said. Tickets are \$20 and \$35 each. Tickets for both concerts can be purchased at www.gettix.com.

“The Cain’s Ballroom show and our opening-night concert on July 9 are the only two events that are ticketed; everything else at the festival is free,” Zundel said. “When the Woody Guthrie Coalition and the Orphanage Society spoke to the Guthrie family about having a festival in honor of Woody Guthrie, the family stressed to keep the festival free. The family thought that Woody Guthrie would want it that way, so it would be open to anyone.”

For information, visit www.woodyguthrie.com.