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Sneak preview of Erk Russell Project at Averitt Center on Dec. 2

NOVEMBER 20, 2007

To put it into words that the old coach might have appreciated, the Erk Russell Project has reached halftime.

A collaboration between the Department of Communication Arts at Georgia Southern University and the Averitt Center for the Arts, the project will eventually result in a stage production that will debut at the kickoff of the 2008 football season and tell the story of Russell's immeasurable impact on Statesboro and the University.

In the meantime, the general public is invited to enjoy a free sneak preview of the oral histories phase of the Erk Russell Project on Sunday, Dec. 2, at 2 p.m. in the Averitt Center at 33 E. Main St.

The performance will feature four local actors portraying men and women whose lives were touched by Russell, the architect of Georgia Southern's nationally renowned football program and a key figure in the growth of the University. Russell died in September 2006 at the age of 80.

An audience feedback session and light refreshments will follow the performance.

'Our mission is to honor Coach Russell's lasting impact on the Statesboro and Georgia Southern communities by facilitating a collaborative research- and performance-based effort between these communities,' said Rebecca Kennerly, an assistant professor of communication arts at Georgia Southern and the co-director of the Erk Russell Project.

'We also want to provide audience members and project collaborators alike with an excellent, entertaining and inspiring theatre arts experience.'

Based largely on oral histories collected from people who were acquaintances of the late coach, the Erk Russell Project is the brainchild of Tim Chapman, the executive director of the Averitt Center.

Chapman recruited Kennerly to facilitate the oral histories portion of the project and to serve as aesthetic director with Scott Garner, the former sports editor of the *Statesboro Herald*. Garner will write the play and co-direct it with Kennerly.

The script remains a work in progress, but Garner is basing much of it on oral histories derived from a series of ongoing interviews with the people who knew Russell best: family members, friends, fans and former players.

Many of these people will be portrayed in the final version of the play, a multi-media production that will include videotaped interviews and archival footage as well as actors on stage.

'It has yet to be decided if we'll have someone portraying Erk,' Kennerly said. 'But the play is still about him, the people who knew him, and the difference he made in the life of our community.'

'At the very least, we will have the archival footage that will allow Erk to speak for himself.'

With the expressed support of the Russell family, the project started in January 2007 as Kennerly and Garner worked with Chapman to develop the vision, research design, performance concept and production schedule.

The second phase of the project began in July. Auditions were held for people who wanted to gather oral histories from those who knew Russell well or were influenced by him.

Four of these interviews will be highlighted during the Dec. 2 performance, which will feature:

- Alan Tyson as Bruce Yawn, a Russell confidante and the owner of Snooky's, the legendary restaurant where the coach held court on a regular basis.
- Tina Douzenis as Jane Page, a Georgia Southern professor who spent many Saturday afternoons in the fall supporting Erk's Eagles.
- David Murkison as Perk Robbins, a Georgia Southern administrator whose friendship with Russell dated back to the coach's days as an assistant at the University of Georgia.
- Rachel Godbee as Sandra Prince, an Eagle cheerleader who was an eyewitness to many of Russell's victories in the late 1980s.

The performances will be based on a personal interview each actor conducted with the person they are portraying. The entire performance is expected to last between 45 minutes and one hour.

'I think people are really going to enjoy it,' Kennerly said. 'The actors will not try to mimic the appearances of the people they are portraying, but they will take on their postures and gestures and facial expressions.'

Immediately following the performance, Kennerly will host a talkback session, during which everyone in attendance will be free to offer their opinions on the performance.

'The audience feedback is a crucial part of this community-based project,' Kennerly said.

In phase three of the project, which begins in January 2008, Garner's script will be finalized, Kennerly will adapt the script for the stage, auditions for the various roles will be held, and the costumes, sets, lighting and sound will be designed.

Starting in July, the fourth and final phase of the project will feature rehearsals and then a two-week run of the production for the general public.

Initial development of the Erk Russell Project was funded with a grant from the Georgia Council on the Arts.

For more background on the project, or for an opportunity to contribute a story about Russell, visit Garner's blog at <http://erkplay.blogspot.com>. For more information, contact Kennerly at rkennerly@georgiasouthern.edu or (912) 486-7325, or the Averitt Center at (912) 212-2787.

Georgia Southern University, a Carnegie Doctoral/Research University, offers more than 120 degree programs serving nearly 17,000 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. The University, one of Georgia's largest, is a top choice of Georgia's HOPE scholars and is recognized for its student-centered approach to education. Visit: www.georgiasouthern.edu.

Bulloch County Sexual Assault Task Force fundraiser now underway

NOVEMBER 20, 2007

The Bulloch County Sexual Assault Task Force (BCSATF) is a community effort that assists victims of sexual assault. The group has offered a 24 hour a day/7 days a week rape crisis hotline (531-1771) since 2003 and has trained more than 100 crisis advocates. The crisis advocates assist rape victims at East Georgia Regional Medical Center and are available to accompany victims to the police department or sheriff's office.

The BCSATF is holding its annual fundraiser, Pecans Galore, through Monday, Dec. 31, to raise money to continue the rape crisis hotline.

The group is offering gift-wrapped bags of freshly picked Georgia pecans in the following flavors: chocolate covered (12 oz.), cinnamon covered (8 oz.) and deliciously glazed (8 oz.). They are also offering large pecan halves that can be used for baking. Prices will vary between \$6 and \$9 per bag.

To order pecans, contact Linda Rohrer Paige, professor in the Department of Literature and Philosophy at Georgia Southern University and co-chair of BCSATF, at 681-0232 or 536-4164.

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Georgia Southern's College of Business Administration featured in Best 290 Business Schools

NOVEMBER 20, 2007

Graduate students speak highly of both the MBA and the Master's of Accounting program at Georgia Southern University. The Princeton Review, a prestigious education services company, featured Georgia Southern's College of Business Administration in the recently published 2008 edition of its *Best 290 Business Schools* (Random House/Princeton Review).

Best 290 Business Schools has two-page profiles of the featured schools with descriptions of their academics, student life, admissions, and career placement services. In a "Survey Says" sidebar, The Princeton Review identifies topics that the College of Business Administration (COBA) students were most in agreement about.

"I love the faculty here," said one student. "Because Georgia Southern is a teaching institution, the professors are very accessible and willing to help. They have time to work with students and to

teach classes.” Also, students appreciate “that the quality of the courses offered is equivalent to those at larger business schools, but there is no big-school mind-set.”

Nearly 100 employers visit the Georgia Southern campus each year. Top employers of graduating MBAs include: Gulfstream Aerospace, Inc.; Memorial Medical Hospital; Great Dane Trucking, Inc.; and Sun Trust Bank.

Many of the full-timers are students who received their undergraduate degree from Georgia Southern and, after seeing the value of an advanced degree, enrolled in a COBA graduate program. One such student explains, “I completed my undergraduate degree at Georgia Southern, and when the MBA program started a concentration in Information Systems, I took the opportunity to continue my education in a field that I am very interested in.”

Georgia Southern’s MBA program boasts “a highly diverse” student body. Students say that they “vary widely in terms of race, sex, and culture.” The majority of the COBA graduate student body is part-time and working in a related business field. They range in ages between 23 and 53, and more than 10 percent of the student body is international.

The Princeton Review does not rank the schools in their *Best 290 Business Schools* on a single hierarchical list from one to 290, or identify one business school as best overall. “We compile our ranking lists in multiple categories based on what students report to us about their schools to help applicants decide which of these academically outstanding schools is best for them,” said Robert Franek, vice president of publishing at The Princeton Review. “We are pleased to recommend the College of Business Administration at Georgia Southern University to readers of our book and users of our Web site as one of the best institutions they could attend to earn an MBA or a MAcc.”