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Music Makes A Home in Pegram; New Music School and Performance Hall Opens

A unique music school is opening in the town of Pegram, Tennessee. Its location is the historic 105 year-old Sears House which has been undergoing renovations to reinforce the foundation, upgrade the plumbing and create wheelchair access. Eight instructor rooms and a lovely meeting hall are preparing to host students of all ages and skill levels in a friendly, non-competitive learning environment. The facility will be known as the Fiddle & Pick and should be the perfect home for its



Gretchen Priest-May and husband Tim May are opening the new center.

new tenants, the Musical Heritage Center of Middle Tennessee.

The Musical Heritage Center of Middle Tennessee, founded by music educator and Pegram resident Gretchen Priest-May, is a not-for-profit

group of musicians and advocates dedicated to preserving and teaching traditional musical arts. Gretchen was previously with The Violin Shop's School of Fiddling in Bellevue as instructor and manager. For years, Gretchen had passed by

the empty old stone building on Highway 70 across from Pegram Station, and one day took a serious look inside. She and husband Tim May, musician, luthier and string instrument repairman, made an offer on the place in late 2007, hoping to create a center that would teach all traditional musical arts, not just fiddle.

Gretchen's objective for forming the Musical Heritage Center has been to create a place where people old and young can come to discover the joy found in making traditional music - mainly, but not limited to, music played on fiddles, banjos, mandolins, guitars and similar instruments - and in particular, music played in the Middle Tennessee region throughout its history: folk songs and old time tunes, bluegrass, old time and swing. But though its main focus will hold fast to traditional acoustic music, the Center is rounding out its program by offering classes in contemporary, jazz and classical styles for those interested.

The Musical Heritage Center will house the talents of the area's finest roots music scholars and instructors, each of whom understands the value of teaching traditional music styles to their students. In addition to affordable private and group lessons, the Fiddle & Pick will feature workshops in advanced instrumental study. A small staging and dance area also makes it possible to offer periodic performances by local and touring musicians. House concerts of various kinds - open to the public - will be scheduled on a regular basis. In addition, classes will be offered in Irish stepdance and clogging, and the hall will host family-style

Contra Dance parties.

The school and performance hall will hold its "Grand Ole Opening" April 4-5, 2008. Doors open at 6 p.m. on Friday with blessings by Pastor Joyce Lighari and Dr. Jack R. May, followed by performances from members of the Grammy-award winning Nashville Bluegrass Band (Alan O'Bryant, Pat Enright, and Andy Todd, with special guests Roland White and Aubrey Haynie), Gretchen's high energy Celtic/Bluegrass band Plaidgrass, local favorites The Felt Shims, and a performance by some of Gretchen's current fiddle

students. The evening will also feature clogging and Irish step-dancing demonstrations, and a chance to see how a bodhran - the drum used primarily in Irish music - is played. David Tiller will be the master of ceremonies for the two-day event.

On Saturday, April 5 at 11 a.m., Gary Binkley, president of the Cheatham Co. Chamber of Commerce, will perform a ribbon cutting ceremony, followed by clogging and Irish step-dancing demonstrations to the music of Plaidgrass, and demonstrations of the bodhran, the bouzouki and folksinging. Midafternoon will bring Old Time and Irish jams, a contra dance demonstration, and a little traditional folksinging. The evening will hold a bluegrass performance by Highland Rim and swing music circa 1920 by Radiola.

The Fiddle & Pick is located at 456 Highway 70 in Pegram (on the corner at the traffic light at Hannah Ford Rd.), next door to the Harpeth Clock & Quilt Co. Gretchen intends to attempt to get the property added to the Historic Register in the future. Once referred to as the Yellowstone House, the original building was constructed on top of a spring, which is still running today. It has been home to many stores and businesses and was the Pegram post office twice in its history; several pieces of furniture in use at that time will be on display at the Center.

The public is invited. There is no charge to attend. Please come by the Grand Ole Opening to find out how you can support the Musical Heritage Center of Middle Tennessee.

Annual Pegram Fish Fry

The Pegram Community Club's annual Fish Fry will be held on Saturday March 29, 2008 at the Clubhouse beside the "Red Caboose" on Hwy. 70 in Pegram TN 37143. Serving begins at 11am, and will continue until the fish is gone, rain or shine, with fish plates featuring a generous helping of fish, slaw, hush-puppies, and home-cooked desert. Adult plates \$8. and Child's plate \$4.

Music beginning at 6:00 in the evening with a cake auction during band breaks. Join us for fun as we support a long-standing Pegram tradition. Look forward to seeing you there!

**Note-Peanut oil is used for frying.

J.T. Ellison, Author of *All The Pretty Girls* Featured at Westview Writers Retreat

Westview Publishing has a great writers retreat planned for the weekend of April 25, 26 and 27 at Bethany Hills Camp in Kingston Springs.

The retreat is planned to be a small, intimate gathering where writers can benefit from the author discussions, as well as talk one-on-one with published authors.

Check-in for the retreat will begin around 1:00 p.m. with the first panel discussion starting at 3:00 p.m. The Friday group of authors will be River Jordan, Brenda Rickman Vantrease and Eric Wilson.

Following time to talk with the authors, dinner will be served. A social and networking time will continue after dinner.

Saturday morning will begin with a continental breakfast. The Saturday morning discussion will be with author J.T. Ellison, after which lunch will be served.

There will be time between lunch and the afternoon session to relax, reflect and maybe even write a bit. The afternoon session will be on researching your subject.

Following dinner there will be entertainment, so anyone who plays an instrument is invited to bring it for a real down home jam session.

Sunday morning's continental breakfast will be fol-

lowed by a session on Traditional Publishing Versus Self-Publishing-Which Is Right For You.

The fee for the retreat is \$300 and includes your room for two nights and all your meals, plus all the sessions and fun meeting other writers. A \$150 deposit is needed by April 18 to reserve your spot. There is very limited space available, so send your deposit early to Westview Publishing, P.O. Box 210183, Nashville, TN 37221. The remainder is due the day of the retreat.



J.T. Ellison is a graduate of Randolph-Macon Woman's College and received her Master's Degree from George Washington University. She was a Presidential Appointee and worked in The White

House and the Department of Commerce before moving into the private sector. As a financial analyst and marketing director, she worked for several defense and aerospace contractors.

After moving to Nashville, Ellison decided to begin research on a passion, forensics and crime. She spent a great deal of time working with the Metro Nashville Police Department, and utilized these experiences to write her debut novel, *ALL THE PRETTY GIRLS*.

Her short stories have been widely published, including "Prodigal Me", featured in the anthology *KILLER YEAR: Stories to Die For*, edited by Lee Child, from St. Martin's Minotaur (January, 2008.)

She is the Friday columnist at Murderati.com and is a founding member of Killer Year, an organization promoting the best debut novelists of 2007.

She lives in Nashville with her husband and a poorly trained cat.

