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Upstate Forever

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Upstate Forever Honors Seven Upstate Champions, Famed Pianist Chuck Leavell Makes Keynote Speech

Greenville, S.C.– February 3, 2011 – Upstate Forever today hosted its second annual ForeverGreen Awards Luncheon honoring individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions in the fields of land conservation, air and water quality, sustainable development, public service and volunteer work in the Upstate. Nearly 350 people attended the event, which was held at Embassy Suites in Greenville. The presenting sponsors were BMW and the Community Journals; many other companies and individuals were also sponsors. The program included lunch, presentation of the awards, and a keynote address by famed Rolling Stones pianist, Chuck Leavell.

This year's award winners *are*:

- Extraordinary Achievement: Tommy Wyche
- Public Servant of the Year: Greer Mayor Rick Danner
- Clear Skies Champion: Pickens County
- Land Conservation Champion: Naturaland Trust
- Clean Water Champion: Dave Hargett
- Sustainable Communities Champion: Frank Powell
- Volunteer of the Year: Rick Huffman

A renowned pianist and keyboardist who formerly played with The Allman Brothers Band and Eric Clapton and still plays with The Rolling Stones, Chuck Leavell is a respected authority on conservation and a successful tree farmer. Following his address on the importance of stewardship and partnership, Leavell performed a few of his favorite songs for the audience.

“This was our opportunity to recognize and say thank you to an amazing group of champions for their contributions in keeping the Upstate as one of the most beautiful, thriving and vibrant regions in the world,” said Brad Wyche, Executive

Director of Upstate Forever. “And what an honor it was to have Chuck Leavell with us to both speak and play!”

About the 2011 Award Winners:

- **Tommy Wyche.** Wyche’s determined, passionate and creative leadership for nearly 40 years is responsible for one of the most significant conservation achievements in United States history—the protection of over 100,000 acres of the Blue Ridge Mountains in South Carolina. Iconic places such as Jones Gap State Park, Caesar’s Head State Park and the Jocassee Gorges owe their existence to Wyche and his extraordinary work. Much of his advocacy for the protection of the South Carolina mountains has been done through six best-selling books of his own nature photography.
- **Mayor Rick Danner.** Elected Mayor of Greer in 2000 and now in his third term, Danner has been the visionary leader of Greer’s dramatic downtown revitalization, including the new Police and Court facility and the new Municipal Complex, which includes a new City Park. His leadership extends beyond Greer—he is a great champion for regionalism and recently served as President of the Municipal Association of South Carolina where he played a key role in the Hometown S.C. initiative aimed at increasing recognition that South Carolina’s cities and towns are the State’s economic engines. Danner is a strong proponent of alternative transportation and “practices what he preaches” through his own active participation in the sport of bicycling.
- **Pickens County.** Pickens County now powers its entire truck fleet with biodiesel. The county collects cooking oil from 20 schools and 40 local businesses and uses its custom-built facility to convert the oil into a B60 mix for the trucks. The biodiesel produces 78% less carbon dioxide emissions than regular diesel fuel and is free of sulfur and aromatics. The county is now converting its patrol cars to propane, with the goal to become the first county in the nation to have an entirely green fleet.
- **Naturaland Trust.** Established by Tommy Wyche in 1973, Naturaland Trust is the second oldest land trust in South Carolina, and its sole focus has been the protection of our state’s mountains. Most recently, Naturaland Trust has secured major grants to protect important lands along Highway 11 and has donated to the South Carolina parks agency large mountain tracts as the “match” for grants used to protect other significant properties. Naturaland Trust designed, and used volunteer high school and college students to construct, the wonderful system of hiking trails in the Mountain Bridge Wilderness Area and has published a popular guide to the trails, now in its fourth edition.

- **Dr. Dave Hargett.** Hargett, an environmental consultant, has worked tirelessly to protect and improve water quality throughout the Upstate. These efforts include leadership of the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, the Lake Conestee project, and the Partners for Trout initiative. Hargett has also been a key partner in Upstate Forever's work in protecting and improving water quality in the North and South Saluda Rivers.
- **Dr. Frank Powell.** Powell, professor of health and exercise science at Furman University for 36 years, has been the pioneering advocate for environmental sustainability and conservation at the university. His accomplishments include Furman's first environmentally sensitive building (the Eco-Cottage), expanded course work on the environment and sustainability, the Cliffs Cottage, and the construction of all new and renovated buildings on campus in accordance with LEED standards.
- **Rick Huffman.** Huffman is the founder and president of Earth Design, Inc., which specializes in cost-effective and environmentally responsible design. He is also one of the country's leading experts on native plants. Despite a full schedule with his business and other nonprofit work, Huffman has done it all for Upstate Forever, including speaking at many of our events without charge, maintaining the native plant landscaping and green roof at our office, and lobbying in Columbia for conservation-friendly legislation.

About Upstate Forever:

Upstate Forever is a nonprofit, membership-based organization that promotes sensible growth and protects special places in the ten-county Upstate region. It has three main programs: Land Trust, Clean Air and Water, and Sustainable Communities. Visit www.upstateforever.org for more information.