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Attention: Under Embargo Until June 13

2016 AJC Decatur Book Festival will celebrate the life and works of author Pat Conroy: Friends, family, noted writers will share the stage for keynote event

Mainstay at DBF, beloved author of *Prince of Tides*, *The Great Santini* passed away of pancreatic cancer on March 4 at age 70

June 13, 2016 (Atlanta) — Cassandra King Conroy, Rick Bragg and other friends and family will gather to pay tribute to bestselling and beloved author Pat Conroy as the keynote event at the 2016 Atlanta-Journal Constitution Decatur Book Festival Presented by DeKalb Medical (DBF), which runs Sept. 2-4.

The Conroy remembrance will kick off the 11th annual festival on Friday, Sept. 2, at 8 p.m. at the Schwartz Center for Performing Arts at Emory University. Conroy died of pancreatic cancer on March 4 at the age of 70.

Family and friends will share special memories of Conroy and read favorite passages from his many books. Those who will participate in special remembrance of this legend in Southern literature will include:

- King Conroy, Pat's wife who is the author of five novels, most recently the critically acclaimed *Moonrise*.
- The Pulitzer Prize-winning Bragg, whose *All Over but the Shoutin'* was a *New York Times* bestseller and a *Times'* notable book of the year.
- Noted artist and children's author Melissa Conroy, Pat's daughter.
- Award-winning and bestselling novelist Ron Rash, author of novels *Serena*, *Above the Waterfall* and *The Risen*, which will launch at the festival.
- Award-winning journalist and family friend Bronwen Dickey, author of *Pit Bull: The Battle Over an American Icon*.

Even before participating as a speaker, Conroy could be found in Decatur on Labor Day weekend, enjoying the atmosphere, breathing in the energy, intelligence and spirit of the AJC Decatur Book Festival. In 2014, he launched the Pat Conroy Selects Track, a selection of festival events in which he handpicked authors he wanted to highlight to his fans. He continued to work with the festival on selecting authors, even as his model led the way for the Roxane Gay Selects Track in 2015. This year, **Alexander Chee**, winner of a 2003 Whiting Award, a 2004 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a contributing editor at *The New Republic* and an editor at large with the prestigious literary journal *VQR*, follows in that tradition and will choose his own track.

DBF Founding Executive Director Daren Wang is honored to host such an important event to celebrate Conroy.

"We felt as though he was part of our family, and since Pat was working on a new novel, we were looking forward to the day we might convince him to keynote the festival," Wang said. "Sadly, we won't have that opportunity. With that, we thought the thing to do was a celebration of what he meant to us all."

Programming Director Julie Wilson said she is excited that the DBF will provide the forum to celebrate the life and work of a legendary Southern literary figure.

“The occasion will be bittersweet because Pat’s presence will be greatly missed at the festival,” Wilson said. “With the tone that the keynote event will set, the festival will get back to its roots, celebrating Southern authors. This year’s line-up includes a number of local and regional authors who are or becoming important voices, as well.”

This year’s featured kidnote author will be **Dav Pilkey**, who has written and illustrated numerous popular, award-winning books for children, including the Captain Underpants and Dumb Bunnies series. Pilkey also is the author of *DOG BREATH*, winner of the California Young Reader Medal, and *THE PAPERBOY*, a Caldecott Honor Book. Growing up as a child in Elyria, Ohio, Pilkey was diagnosed with and suffers from dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. At the DBF, Pilkey will launch *Dog Man*, a book about a crime-biting canine who is part dog, part man. With the head of a dog and the body of a human, this heroic hound has a real nose for justice. But can he resist the call of the wild to answer the call of duty?

In July, the DBF will begin releasing more information on topics such as when keynote and kidnote tickets will be available, the schedule of events and other tracks and news of interest.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution Decatur Book Festival Presented by DeKalb Medical (DBF) is the largest independent book festival in the country. Over Labor Day weekend tens of thousands from metro Atlanta and beyond share the historic Decatur Square with world-class authors, illustrators, editors, publishers and booksellers for a weekend filled with literature, music, food and fun. For more information, visit www.decaturookfestival.com, “like” Decatur Book Festival on Facebook or follow @DBookFestival on Twitter.

Interviews available upon request.

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