

Press Release

Carter Family Memorial Music Center, Inc.

Saturday, March 10, 2018, at 7:30 p.m., the Carter Family Fold in Hiltons, Virginia, will present a concert of old time music by the Whitetop Mountain Band. Admission to the concert is \$10 for adults, \$2 for children 6 to 11, under age 6 free.

Whitetop Mountain Band is a family-based band from the highest mountains of Virginia. Whitetop is an area rich in old time music tradition, and this band has deep roots in mountain music. The band's members have worked tirelessly to preserve the region's style of old time fiddling and banjo picking and are legendary musicians and teachers of the style. Their shows are high energy and unlike any other show you have ever seen. There's everything from fiddle and banjo instrumentals to powerful solos and harmony vocals on blues, classic country, honky tonk, traditional bluegrass numbers, old timey ballads, originals, four-part mountain gospel songs – and some flat foot dancing. Well-known for their charisma on stage and their ability to engage audiences of all ages, this group has been performing at the Carter Fold since shows first began at the A.P. Carter Grocery in the 1970s.



The Whitetop Mountain Band is one of the most popular dance bands of the Appalachian Mountains. They have a great following at square dances all over Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky at venues like the Carter Fold. The group has performed throughout the U.S. at festivals, concerts, competitions, and colleges. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, National Folklife Festival, World Music Institute in New York City, the Carter Family Festival, the Dock Boggs Festival, the World's Fair, the Virginia Arts Festival, Floydfest, Ola Belle Reed Festival, and Merlefest are a few of the many festivals that have featured the band. The group has



toured in England, Wales, Ireland, and Australia. They have taught at workshops and classes all over the U.S. like the Swannanoa Gathering, Cowan Creek Music School, Big Stone Gap's Mountain Music School, and the Mt. Rogers Combined School. They were featured on a NCTA music tour of the east and west coasts in 2010. Arhoolie, the Virginia Foundation of the Humanities, JuneAppal, Heritage, and Rounder Records are a few of the labels they have recorded for. In addition, they have been featured in many magazines, TV shows, and radio programs. Whitetop Mountain Band was recently given the "Entertainer of the Year" award in the old time category at the ACMA's Blue Ridge Acoustic Uprising.

The band originated with Albert Hash in the 1940s. Albert was a well-known and beloved fiddler and luthier. As a teenager, Albert played with Henry Whitter of Grayson & Whitter. Grayson & Whitter recorded in the 1920s. The tune "Hangman's Reel" that Albert recorded is the same version played by so many old time musicians today. He taught Wayne Henderson, Audrey Ham, and many others to build instruments.

In the 1970s, Albert's brother-in-law, Thornton Spencer, and his wife Emily joined Albert in the Whitetop Mountain Band. The three also started an old time music program at Mt. Rogers School, a small K-12 public school in Whitetop. The students learn fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass, and dancing. Emily Spencer has carried on the program, and it has received a lot of regional and national attention for its uniqueness – including Grammy and CMT nominations.

The Whitetop Mountain Band is still carried on today by the Spencer family and their friends. Emily Spencer is featured on banjo and vocals. Emily's daughter, Martha Spencer, plays with the band as well. She is a multi-instrumentalist (guitar, banjo, fiddle, and bass) and fine vocalist and dancer. Emily's son, Kilby Spencer, will be doing lots of fiddling. Debbie Bramer moved from Michigan to Fancy Gap, Virginia. She plays bass in the band and dances. Debbie has been part of several clogging teams and has been active in many dance workshops and competitions. Ersel Fletcher plays guitar and adds his vocal talent to the group.



The fast-paced mountain music of the Whitetop Mountain Band of Grayson County is definitely a family affair. Be sure to check out the Spencers and their family band at the Fold. Lots of people play old time music, but no one plays it with as much fierce intensity – or absolute fun – as the Whitetop Mountain Band! For additional information on the group, go to <http://whitetopmountainband.com/>.

Carter Family Memorial Music Center, Incorporated, is a nonprofit, rural arts organization established to preserve traditional, acoustic, mountain music. The center is family-friendly, and an alcohol and drug free facility. For further information, go to <http://www.carterfamilyfold.org> or our second site – <http://www.carterfamilyfold.com/>. Shows from the Carter Family Fold can be accessed at <http://www.carterfoldshow.com>. Partial funding for programs at the center is provided by the *Virginia Commission for the Arts*, the *National Endowment for the Arts*, the *Virginia Tourism Corporation*. For recorded information on shows coming up at the Fold, call 276-386-6054. The Fold is on Facebook – page Carter Fold – and Twitter – @carterfoldinfo. To speak to a volunteer Fold staff member, call 276-594-0676. If we don't answer you right away, we'll get back to you in 24 hours.