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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Celebrates 20 Years

Designated by Congress in 2006, the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area will celebrate two decades with a 20th Anniversary Celebration at Vaughters' Barn in Stonecrest that'll feature live blues and bluegrass music, free ice cream, local BBQ, and more!

STONECREST, GA – Arabia Mountain might be 400 million years old, but the organization that helps steward and tell the mountain's story just turned 20! Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area was designated by congress in 2006 and is now one of three National Heritage Areas (NHAs) in Georgia. Under the National Park Service, there are more than 60 NHAs across the nation, each one serving as a kind of museum without walls that tells the broader story of a whole region, not just one park or preserve. NHAs specialize in the interpretation of living landscapes that intersect with nature, culture and history.

In the case of Arabia Mountain NHA just a half-hour east of Downtown Atlanta, this heritage area stretches some 40,000 acres and includes parts of three Metro Area counties (DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry) from the Monastery of the Holy Spirit and Panola Mountain State Park in the south to historic Lithonia and Flat Rock farther north, and the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve at its center. Arabia Mountain NHA holds 400 million years of history, starting with the ancient outcrop at Arabia and Panola Mountains and encompassing many historical periods from ancient to modern indigenous inhabitants, Colonialism and Antebellum periods, to the Civil War through Civil Rights in Georgia and up to modern-day conservation. The Arabia Alliance is tasked with uncovering and sharing these stories.

"Our National Heritage Area started because a small group of individuals saw the value of protecting public lands for the sole enjoyment of others, quite simply," said Revonda Cosby, executive director of the Arabia Alliance, the nonprofit organization that manages the 40,000-acre Heritage Area. "Flash forward 20 years, we're still proud to be protecting these places that tell America's story. As one of 63 national heritage areas across the country, we're looking forward to building economic vitality and driving tourism that never loses its sense of community. NHAs are at the intersection of community, government and public service, and we fill in the gaps where needed."

To mark 20 years of nonprofit work, preservation, conservation, and community engagement, the Arabia Alliance is throwing a 20th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, October 11 from 2-6pm. The celebration will take place across the street from the Arabia Alliance office at Vaughters' Barn at 3366 Klondike Road in Stonecrest. Expect live blues and bluegrass music, free ice cream, local food vendors including BBQ, and a popup exhibit about the history of Arabia Mountain NHA inside historic Vaughters' Barn, itself.

"While the rich history of the National Heritage Area predates 2006, we are extremely proud of the tremendous feats of the Alliance over this 20-year span," said the Arabia Alliance's assistant executive director Brigette Jones. A historian by trade, Jones recently co-authored a book about the

heritage area for its 20th anniversary as part of Arcadia Publishing's bestselling Images of America series, making it the first history book about Arabia and Panola Mountains and surrounding communities like Flat Rock and Lithonia. "We are looking forward to continuing to create new and innovative ways to meet people, as we like to say, at the intersection of nature, culture, and history."

The Arabia Alliance will be joined by a number of its partners in pop-up tents with lots of giveaways and activities including walks through Vaughters' Meadow (the last intact dairy meadow in DeKalb County) with an Arabia Ranger, cool animal ambassadors from AWARE Wildlife Center, and free intro bluegrass/blues guitar lessons from the Arabia Alliance. The celebration will have a festival atmosphere with tables representing the some of the Heritage Area's partners:

- AWARE
- Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve
- Monastery of the Holy Spirit
- Panola Mountain State Park
- South River Watershed Alliance

The Arabia Alliance will also be hosting an NHA 20th Anniversary Founders Coffee on Friday, October 30 at Panola Mountain State Park's Event Room. Enjoy coffee, tea, a light breakfast, and a chance to meet and greet the co-founders of Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area: Becky Kelley and Kelly Jordan. In 2006, Jordan, a local developer with a passion for conservation and photojournalism, cofounded the Heritage Area with then-DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation Director Becky Kelley.

"Looking back on our designation as a National Heritage Area, we pay respects to many who helped along the way," said Kelly Jordan. "Starting with then Senator Max Cleland, who first suggested that we consider trying to become a national heritage area (and who shepherded the bill through the US Senate), Dayton Sherrouse, head of the Augusta Canal NHA who gave early guidance, the Turner Foundation for early support, DeKalb County and its Parks Department, The Conservation Fund who gave invaluable assistance in land preservation, and others. "

About the Arabia Alliance

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance is dedicated to protecting, connecting and sharing the unique history, rich culture and engaging landscapes of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area (AMNHA) for the benefit and enjoyment of all. The staff and volunteer board of the Arabia Alliance work with partners across AMNHA to ensure that everyone can benefit from the cultural and natural resources of the National Heritage Area. For more information, visit www.arabiaalliance.org.