



## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
910-315-3745 or [info@May20thSociety.org](mailto:info@May20thSociety.org)

### THE MAY 20<sup>TH</sup> SOCIETY ANNOUNCES ANNUAL MECDEC CELEBRATION

*Celebratory Preparations Begin for the 234<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence*

**Charlotte, N.C.** – The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society, a Charlotte-based, non-profit organization that captures and celebrates the city’s rebellious past and visionary future, announces its 2009 historical celebration honoring the 234<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. It was on May 20, 1775 that Mecklenburg became the first American colony to declare independence from Great Britain.

Kicking off the 2009 celebration will be the annual Captain Jack's Commemorative Bike Ride on Saturday, April 11 at 9:00am.

Then on Wednesday, May 20, a noon observance of the MecDec will take place at Trade and Tryon streets in Charlotte. This event is free and open to the public. That evening, The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society will culminate the historical celebration with its fourth annual Evening Speaker Series featuring acclaimed historian and author, Doris Kearns Goodwin at the McGlohon Theatre.

“Doris’ zeal for American history and literary focuses are truly inspiring,” said Charles R. Jonas, III, board chairman of The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society. “We are thrilled to have her speak in our community to our schoolchildren and speaker series attendees as the core component of our celebration.”

Goodwin is the author of the award-winning *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* which Barak Obama has repeatedly been seen reading and called “a wonderful book”. The New York Times bestseller illuminates Lincoln's political genius, his mastery of men and how it shaped the most significant presidency in the nation's history. A Pulitzer Prize recipient, Goodwin also serves as an NBC-TV news analyst.

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After Goodwin's presentation, the floor will be opened to a Q&A session. Tickets to the fourth-annual speaker series are available for \$35. Seating is based on a first-come basis. To purchase tickets, visit [May20thSociety.org](http://May20thSociety.org), [CarolinaTIX.org](http://CarolinaTIX.org) or call 704.372.1000 to purchase them by phone.

Charlotte's May 20<sup>th</sup> MecDec Celebration dates back to the 1820s, and has been attended by four sitting U.S. presidents including William H. Taft in 1909, Woodrow Wilson in 1916, Dwight Eisenhower in 1954 and Gerald Ford in 1975.

### **About The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society**

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society promotes Charlotte's rich history of being the first American colony to declare independence from Great Britain. On May 20, 1775, more than two dozen colonial civic leaders from Mecklenburg County approved and unanimously adopted the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. In honor of this historical occasion, The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society hosts several ceremonial events including live re-enactments, an annual speaker series featuring renowned historians, and an educational outreach program to Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and civic organizations. For more information, visit [www.May20thSociety.org](http://www.May20thSociety.org).

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## *2009 events*

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### **CMS Student Speaker Series and Discussion**

#### **Doris Kearns Goodwin to Address CMS Students**

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society are partners in getting kids excited about history. The May 20th Society is committed to education and is actively involved in outreach to Charlotte's young people. In addition to our adult speaker series, The May 20th Society has made it possible for Doris Kearns Goodwin to speak to Charlotte schoolchildren on the morning of May 20th, 2009 in partnership with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools.

### **CMS Television May 20<sup>th</sup> Society Production**

Tentative Air Date: May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society proudly presents the first ever MecDec Charlotte History video production broadcast to Charlotte students via CMS-TV. The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society helped fund the production of this multi-media resource for children who cannot attend the student speaker series, and pending financing, plan to provide in-classroom lesson plan resources for teachers to use in teaching our children about Charlotte's vibrant history.

### **Noon Observance Celebration**

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society produces an annual free-to-the-public Noon Observance Commemoration. In partnership with Charlotte Center City Partners, the event is held at Trade and Tryon Streets to recognize Charlotte's historical role in our country's revolution. The event features re-enactors, militiamen and other exciting visual and interactive surprises for all Charlotteans to enjoy.

### **Captain Jack Revolutionary Bike Ride**

April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society sponsors an annual Captain Jack bike ride. Hundreds of bicyclers gather to ride, 5, 10, 20 and 50 mile rides to celebrate Captain Jack's historic ride to deliver the MecDec to Philadelphia. The ride is in partnership with Charlotte Health and Fitness Magazine.



## 2009 events

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## Speaker Series

### Doris Kearns Goodwin

May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society proudly presents Doris Kearns Goodwin. Kearns Goodwin, a multiple award-winning author will speak at the May 20<sup>th</sup> Society Fourth Annual Lecture Series event on the evening of May 20<sup>th</sup> at The McGlohan Theater and our CMS student history lecture and discussion.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, world-renowned historian, is the author of several books, commentator for NBC, and a consultant and on-air person for PBS documentaries on Lyndon B. Johnson, the Kennedy Family, Franklin Roosevelt, and Ken Burns' *The History of Baseball*. She was the first female journalist to enter the Red Sox locker room. She received her Ph.D. in Government from Harvard University, where she taught Government including a course on the American Presidency. Following her tenure at Harvard, Mrs. Goodwin served as an assistant to Lyndon Johnson in his last year in the White House. She later assisted Johnson in the preparation of his memoirs.

She is the author of *Lyndon Johnson & The American Dream*, which became a *New York Times* best seller. She followed up in 1987 with the political biography, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, which stayed on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List for five months. In 1990, it was made into a six-hour ABC miniseries. Her next book, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The American Home Front During World War II*, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in April 1995, as well as the Harold Washington Literary Award, the New England Bookseller Association Award, the Ambassador Book Award, and the Washington Monthly Book Award. It was a *New York Times* best seller for six months.

Her most recent work, a monumental history of Abraham Lincoln entitled *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, published in October 2005, joined the best-seller lists on its first week in publication, and soon reached #1 on the *New York Times* Best-Seller List. *Team of Rivals* won the 2006 Lincoln Prize for an outstanding work about the president and/or the Civil War, the inaugural New York Historical Society Book Prize, the Richard Nelson Current award and the New York State Archives History Makers Award. Steven Spielberg is developing a feature film about the book, set to star Liam Neeson as Lincoln and Sally Field as Mary.



## *in the community*

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The May 20th Society promotes Charlotte's rich history of being the first to declare independence from Great Britain in the American colonies. The May 20th Society is a non-profit organization that celebrates the MecDec through hosting and sponsoring events, an annual speaker series featuring world renowned historians, and educational outreach.

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society supports historic and resource groups across the region and partners with a host of talented colonial re-enactors for our events. Rosedale Plantation, the Charlotte History Museum, and Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Libraries are just a few places we count as partners in bringing the story of the MecDec to the community. The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society is involved with the following community projects:



*Thanks to your generous support,  
The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society is  
constructing the statue of Capt.  
James Jack on the Little Sugar  
Creek Greenway.*



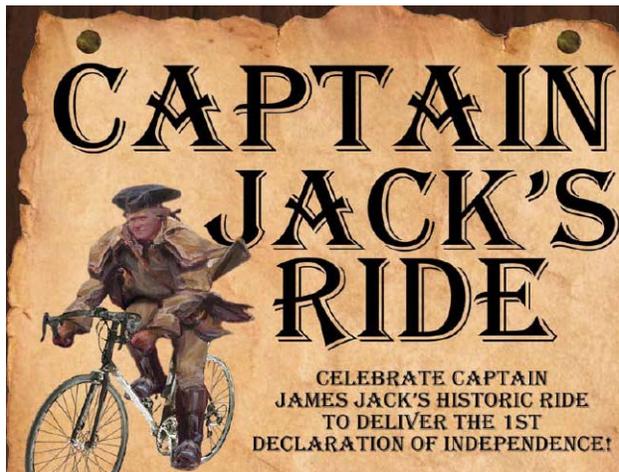
*Our annual speaker series has featured Ken Burns,  
David McCullough and Michael Beschloss.*



*Each year our May 20<sup>th</sup> Society speakers participate in a lecture and discussion with CMS schoolchildren in an effort to inspire them to get excited about history, and embrace the history of the city of Charlotte.*



*The May 20th Society hosts the annual MecDec noon observance commemoration for the general public on Charlotte's Independence Square.*



*We sponsor the annual 10, 20 and 50 mile James Jack Bike Ride which draws hundreds of bicycle riders to commemorate the historic ride of Captain James Jack from Charlotte to Philadelphia.*



*The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society sponsored the planting of the Liberty Tree in Freedom Park.*



*The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society supports the arts in the community, participating in events such as the CPCC Arts Fest and the Thanksgiving Day parade through Uptown Charlotte.*





## **NEWS ADVISORY**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **CELEBRATE THE SPIRIT OF MECKLENBURG**

***The 234th Anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence***

**WHAT:** The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society is celebrating the anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (MecDec) which was signed on May 20, 1775. The 2009 MecDec Commemoration will feature several events including Capitan Jack's Bike Ride, the Youth Speaker Series for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and the fourth-annual Evening Speaker Series with Doris Kearns Goodwin. The noon-observance, a free event open to the public, will also be held at Independence Square in Charlotte.

**WHEN:**

**Saturday, April 11th**

James Jack Bike Ride

9:00a.m. – Waxhaw Elementary School

Lunch will be served following the ride along with prizes and t-shirts.

Cost is \$20

**Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>**

10:00 a.m. – CMS Youth Speaker Series featuring Doris Kearns Goodwin

11:45a.m – 12:30 p.m. Noon Observance of the MecDec at Independence Square (the corner of Trade and Tryon Street in Charlotte)

6:30 p.m. – Evening Speaker Series with Doris Kearns Goodwin

**WHERE:**

The CMS Youth Speaker Series and the Evening Adult Speaker Series will be held in the McGlohon Theater. The noon observance will take place at Independence Square on the corner of Trade and Tryon Streets.

**WHO:**

The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society promotes Charlotte's rich history of being the first American colony to declare independence from Great Britain. The Charlotte-based, non-profit organization celebrates the city's rebellious history and visionary future. The 2009 MecDec Commemoration is the organization's annual celebration of the adoption of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence.

For tickets to the evening lecture, visit [May20thSociety.org](http://May20thSociety.org) or call 704.372.1000. The cost to attend the Evening Speaker Series is \$35. For more information on The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society and the Spirit of Mecklenburg, visit [www.May20thSociety.org](http://www.May20thSociety.org).

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### **“Captain Jack” Bike Ride Captures Spirit of MecDec**

*April 11 Event Commemorates Historic 1775 Ride*

**Charlotte, N.C.** – The May 20th Society, a non-profit group which organizes and funds educational events to celebrate the history of Mecklenburg County, is partnering with Charlotte Health and Fitness (CHF) Magazine, a fitness-focused publication with a readership of thousands of cyclers, for the bike ride to commemorate Charlotte’s original rebel, Captain James Jack. The annual event is scheduled for Saturday, April 11.

Captain Jack, a colonial tavern owner, rode more than 1,100 miles on horseback all the way to Philadelphia to deliver the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (MecDec) to the Second Continental Congress in 1775.

The event will mark the start of The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society’s 2009 MecDec celebration and is expected to draw several hundred cyclists. Beginner and seasoned cyclists alike can ride in 20- and 50-mile routes, while families can enjoy a short five-mile route. The ride will be held on the outskirts of the county in the Waxhaw area to allow for the extended course. Though not considered a race, door prizes will be awarded to participants for various accomplishments.

David Klein, avid cyclist and CHF publisher, says the ride is a great way for participants to get valuable exercise while supporting a worthy Charlotte cause.

“We are honored to be participating again with The May 20<sup>th</sup> Society for this event,” said Klein. “It’s very exciting to be a part of our city’s great history, and being able to tie it in with our goal of fitness makes it a great partnership that we look forward to continuing for years to come.”

Pat Mumford, also a passionate cyclist and former city councilman, chaired the event and will ride in support. “Although we won’t be riding all the way to Philadelphia, this is a great way to celebrate a classic happening in Charlotte’s history,” said Mumford.

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The ride will begin at 9:00 am and online registration is available by clicking on the Charlotte Health and Fitness Magazine web site at [www.CHFMag.com](http://www.CHFMag.com). The cost for registration is \$20 for adults and children 15-18, and includes marked rest stops, Captain Jack t-shirts, and family-style lunch at the start/finish line. For more information or to register visit [www.CHFMag.com](http://www.CHFMag.com) or call 910-315-3745.

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