



MEDIA RELEASE

**CONTACT:** Sarah Dalton  
Concord University  
Office of Advancement  
PO Box 1000, Athens, WV 24712  
(304) 384-6312, [news@concord.edu](mailto:news@concord.edu)  
[www.concord.edu](http://www.concord.edu)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Dec. 22, 2011

**PETE BALLARD NAMED CONCORD UNIVERSITY'S  
2012 GRAND GROUNDHOG WATCHER**

**ATHENS, W.Va.** – Artist, educator and Concord alumnus Pete Ballard has been named Grand Groundhog Watcher for the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Concord University Groundhog Day Breakfast. The yearly gathering of food, fellowship and folklore will be held on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2012 at 8 a.m. in the Jerry L. Beasley Student Center Ballroom on the Athens campus.

The Grand Groundhog Watcher honor is bestowed on an individual who has positively impacted life and culture in West Virginia.

Ballard was born in Welch, W.Va. and received a degree in education from Concord in 1953. He taught for many years at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C. His career as an educator also took him to Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and China.

He is a nationally known costume designer, museum costume historian and conservator. His exquisitely designed and crafted fashion dolls and hat dolls have also brought him acclaim as an artist. These delightful creations are part of numerous museum collections, all donated by Ballard.

In the area of civic involvement, he has served as board chairman for the Coal Heritage Highway Authority of West Virginia and commissioner on the West Virginia Archives and History Commission and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts.

The recipient of many awards and honors, Ballard was named Concord University's Golden Alumnus in 2007. He is among the Outstanding Educators in America and has received the Order of the Arts and Historical Letters from the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

His work with costumes earned the Award of Merit from the North Carolina Historic Preservation Society and a Golden Globe Award from the National Retail Merchants Associates. The West Virginia Cultural Center hosted a gala in his honor and an exhibition of his fashion dolls and paintings in 2007.

He is recipient of the Distinguished West Virginian award – the most prestigious honor presented by the governor – and the State's Order of the 35th Star. Ballard currently resides in Peterstown, W.Va. where his art continues to flourish with the addition of new dolls and paintings.

Ballard will share the spotlight with Concord Charlie. The famed groundhog weather prophet has a standing appointment with Concord University's President each year to offer his predictions and insights on the duration of winter. President Gregory F. Aloia will relay Charlie's forecast to the breakfast guests.

According to Groundhog Day tradition, if Concord Charlie sees his shadow the morning of Feb. 2, six more weeks of winter can be expected. An early spring will be on the way if he doesn't see his shadow.

The Concord Charlie tradition was originated in 1978 by the late Professor R.T. "Tom" Hill. As chairman of both the geography department and the Appalachian Studies program at

Concord, he started the Groundhog Day Breakfast as a means to celebrate a bit of Appalachian heritage and highlight the program.

Cost for this year's ham and eggs breakfast is \$10 per person in advance or \$12 at the door. Current members of the Concord University Alumni Association (2011-2012) may attend the event for \$8. Reservations are requested.

For additional information about the breakfast, including payment options and to make reservations, contact the Concord University Office of Advancement at 304-384-6311 or [advancement@concord.edu](mailto:advancement@concord.edu)

*Persons with disabilities should contact Nancy Ellison, 1-304-384-6086 or 1-800-344-6679 extension 6086 if special assistance is required for access to an event scheduled by the University on campus.*

\*\*A photograph of Pete Ballard, a Concord Charlie logo and a list of Grand Groundhog Watchers are also part of this press release.



**PETE BALLARD**

*Concord University Photo By Lance McDaniel*