



NEWS RELEASE

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Beaufort Tricentennial parade organizers name actor, 'Lt. Dan' Gary Sinise grand marshal

Forrest Gump's Lt. Dan, actor Gary Sinise, will serve as Beaufort's grand marshal for the Sept. 17 historical Tricentennial Parade, organizers announced today.

The morning parade through downtown Beaufort will feature floats highlighting periods of Beaufort's 300 years, said Erin Dean, chair of the Tricentennial Committee. Entries are sought and applications are available at Beaufort City Hall, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce and online at www.cityofbeaufort.org.

"This is going to be a special parade, one that we hope young people and the rest of us will remember a long time," Dean said. "The floats must reflect something about Beaufort's history."

The Sept. 17 parade through downtown Beaufort will celebrate different eras in Beaufort's history, including its role in wars, in Civil Rights, in economic growth and in culture. The event coincides with the second annual Lieutenant Dan Weekend, a retreat for severely wounded veterans created by the Independence Fund in Beaufort. Sinise and the *Lieutenant Dan Band* will entertain those veterans, their caregivers and others the night before the big parade.

Sinise first visited Beaufort in his role as "Lieutenant Dan" in the Hollywood film *Forrest Gump* with Tom Hanks. Between shooting his popular TV series *CSI: New York*, he tours the country with the band to raise money for injured veterans. Sinise also is known for his role in the movie *Apollo 13* alongside co-star Hanks.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have Gary Sinise serve as grand marshal for this once in a lifetime parade," said Donnie Beer, the Beaufort City Councilwoman who led the charge to connect the

busy actor with the Tricentennial event. “We hope to see thousands of people lining the parade route to see him and to learn more about what’s made Beaufort such a special place for three centuries.”

Parade participants are encouraged to use professional float companies for their entries, Dean said. The entry fee is \$25 for groups and free for registered non-profit organizations.

As arrangements continue for different ways to mark the historic 300th birthday, organizers of the Beaufort 300 project are in the final stretch to raise funds for a new historical marker. For a \$300 investment in Beaufort’s future, donors’ names will be featured on a permanent historical monument in the Waterfront Park commemorating the Tricentennial. Corporate and non-profit sponsorships also are available.

Also this fall, Beaufort County schools are working on a variety of projects to study, recognize and celebrate Beaufort’s 300th birthday. Those projects, kicking off when school resumes in mid-August, will be rolled out later this fall, said Margaret Rushton, the liaison between the school district and Beaufort Tricentennial.

Between now and the end of 2011, the Beaufort Tricentennial Committee will be working with organizations to continue to highlight the past three centuries. The recently-wrapped 56th Water Festival, for instance, showcased Beaufort’s history throughout the 10-day event.

Meanwhile, City leaders are laying a path for an even better fourth century through a revitalized city planning process that’s already brought new residential construction and adaptive re-use of the former Beaufort City Hall. Lowcountry Produce will be opening a food market with a targeted opening in October.

Beaufort was founded in 1711 by the English, although its beginnings date back to Spanish explorers in 1514. Beaufort was named for Englishman Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort (1684-1714), one of the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. It was on Jan. 17, 1711, that Beaufort’s formal charter was created.

On Dec. 31, 2010, the Tricentennial party kicked off with a packed Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park. This coming New Year’s Eve, celebrants will conclude the year-long birthday party with another party in the park, Dean said.

“While our actual ‘birthday’ was on January 17, we made a decision a year ago that we would celebrate the 300th birthday of our great city throughout 2011,” Dean said. “Between City events like the Founders’ Night and the upcoming parade in September, our regular festivals have been spotlighting the Tricentennial.”

For more information and to sign-up for Beaufort 300, visit www.cityofbeaufort.org and look in the upper left corner. You can also join Beaufort Tricentennial on Facebook. For more information on Gary Sinise, The LT Dan Band and the Gary Sinise Foundation go to www.garysinisefoundation.org .

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