



THE  
AMERICAN  
CHESTNUT  
FOUNDATION®

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Former President Carter to Join Georgia Nonprofit at Gala Event to Help Restore the American Chestnut**

Former President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter will help celebrate the continued efforts to restore the American chestnut tree to Georgia at a gala event on February 16, 2012, at the Carter Center in Atlanta, GA. The event, hosted by the Georgia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation, will focus on involving the Atlanta community in ongoing efforts to return this tree to Georgia.

President Carter, a long-time supporter of The American Chestnut Foundation, has written passionately about his childhood memories of this magnificent tree. According to President Carter, "Restoring the American chestnut tree is one of the most interesting and important scientific projects of our time."

Rolling Stones keyboardist Chuck Leavell and his wife Rose Lane will also attend the event. The Leavell's are active forest landowners from Georgia and have a long-term commitment to forest conservation.

Although well known internationally for his musical achievements, Mr. Leavell is also an accomplished author who focuses his writings on forest health and conservation. His acclaimed book *Forever Green* and the recent publication of his *Growing a Better America* clearly demonstrate his passion for and understanding of forestry and conservation issues.

"The American chestnut tree was once a vitally important part of Georgia's forests." says TACF Georgia Chapter President, Joe Nicholson. "This event is a wonderful opportunity to highlight TACF's effort to breed and restore a resistant American chestnut tree to much of the former Georgia and Eastern Forest range."

Deborah Baker, vice president - sustainable forestry, environmental and community outreach for the Atlanta-based Georgia-Pacific, says, “Georgia-Pacific had the unique opportunity to join efforts with the American Chestnut Foundation last year in a planting to reintroduce the American chestnut to its native habitat at our Big Island, Va., facility site. The American Chestnut Foundation’s mission to bring back this mighty tree aligns well with our commitments to being good stewards of the environment and enhancing the sustainability of our nation’s forests.”

Once the mighty giant of our eastern forests, American chestnuts stood up to 100-feet tall and numbered in the billions. They were a vital part of the forest ecology, a key food source for wildlife and an essential component of the human economy. In 1904, a blight, accidentally imported from Asia, spread rapidly through the American chestnut population. By 1950 the blight fungus had killed about 4 billion trees from Maine to Georgia. Several attempts to breed blight-resistant trees in the mid-1900s were unsuccessful.

Then, in 1983, a dedicated group of scientists formed The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF®) and began a special breeding process, which in 2005 produced the first potentially blight-resistant trees, called Restoration Chestnuts. Now assisted by nearly 6,000 members and volunteers in 23 states, the organization is undertaking the planting of Restoration Chestnuts in select locations throughout the eastern United States as part of its early restoration and testing efforts.

The Georgia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation was formed with the goal of utilizing existing native American chestnut trees within Georgia in a backcross breeding program. The chapter, which has about 200 members, currently maintains two breeding orchards, one at Berry College in Mount Berry, GA, and one located in Armuchee, GA. For more information on the Georgia Chapter of TACF contact Mark Stoakes at (770) 319-9196 or [mstoakes@hotmail.com](mailto:mstoakes@hotmail.com).

TACF is a 501(c)3 conservation organization headquartered in Asheville, NC. To learn about TACF and its national breeding program, visit [www.acf.org](http://www.acf.org). For information on The American Chestnut Foundation and its work to restore the American chestnut tree, contact Paul Franklin at (828) 281-0047 or [pfranklin@acf.org](mailto:pfranklin@acf.org).

#### **EVENT CALENDAR:**

**What:** Chestnut Foundation Dinner

**When:** Thursday, February 16, 2012 at 6:00pm

**Where:** The Carter Center, 453 Freedom Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30317