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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Commemorative "Land of Oz" Launch Scheduled at Statesville's First Flight Location

Statesville, NC (10/13/2014) – This October marks a special place in hot air ballooning history as we remember two local aviation pioneers, Tracy Barnes and Bill Meadows, who made the first hot air balloon flight in Iredell County. To commemorate their first flight, a special launch is scheduled at that exact location.

Several participating pilots of 2014 Carolina BalloonFest are scheduled to lift off at the first flight marker at Newtowne Plaza in Statesville, NC on Friday, October 17 near 7:30 AM. Near the same time, approximately 12 pilots will launch from local schools and sponsor locations to spotlight Carolina BalloonFest weekend.

About the first flight of "Land of Oz". At this location Bill Meadows and Tracy Barnes made the first hot air balloon flight in Iredell County on October 4, 1969. This was the maiden flight for the balloon "LAND OF OZ" and the first flight for one of Tracy's new design creations, the triangle wicker carriage. An east wind carried the balloon over downtown Statesville with the landing on Buffalo Shoals Road, just east of Statesville Airport. The flight covered 4.3 miles and lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Bill Meadows, a native of Statesville, founded Balloon Ascensions, LTD (a flight training and promotion company) on Chipley Ford Road in 1969. In 1974 Bill founded The National Balloon Rally. For the first five years of the rally, most of the flights were made from Balloon Ascensions.

Tracy Barnes moved the Balloon Works from Charlotte, North Carolina to Rhyne Aerodrome, near Love Valley and started manufacturing balloons there in 1974. Tracy sold the Balloon works in 1982 and it was moved to Salisbury Road. In 1984, Tracy founded The Blimp Works, located in Iredell County.

About Carolina BalloonFest. Over 50 breath-taking hot air balloons and 4 unique special shapes will decorate the skies of Iredell County October 17-19 at Statesville Regional Airport.

Although hot air balloons only take flight after dawn and near dusk when the thermal atmosphere is most stable, tethered balloon rides are anchored to offer an abbreviated sensation of flight when elevated nearly 100 ft. above the ground. Weather permitting, hot air flights and tethered balloon rides are available to purchase direct with participating pilots throughout the weekend.

Throughout the weekend of flights, pilots participate in Sanctioned Competitions. On Saturday and Sunday mornings, balloons fly over the venue and spectators can observe the pilots' skillfully complete field tasks such as marker drops and a pole ring toss. Pilots can compete for points to enhance their standings in the national Hot Air Competition Division of Balloon Federation of America. The first Pilot Meet & Greet happens on Saturday and Sunday afternoons when select pilots and crews will set up their gondolas on the field for one hour to offer balloon education and up-close spectator encounters.

Fun, family, festival attractions include a 3-day entertainment line-up on Main Stage with Bing Futch, The Low Counts, Dr. Bacon and Albannach, Vice Versa, One Leg Rooster, Gal Friday Band, Overmountain Men, The Cockman Family and Chuck Johnson & Charlyhorse. The coffee house style 2nd Stage, hosts the talent of local musicians on Saturday and Sunday. An ever-active Kids Zone, Guests can opt to experience NC Wines & Craft Beer Tasting to complement all the outdoor festivities on Saturday and Sunday.

Carolina BalloonFest soars to benefit American Cancer Society (ACS) Relay for Life of Statesville and local non-profits who volunteer at the festival. Cash only day-of-event; adult admissions range from \$5 to \$15.00; children age 12 and under are admitted free. Save with Advance Ticket Purchase online through October 16. *Limited on-site parking.* Spectators are encouraged to take advantage of satellite parking at Iredell County Fairgrounds in Troutman with free shuttle service to the BalloonFest gates. Arrive by 2PM on Saturday and Sunday to ensure entry. Festival gate times are:

Friday, October 17 3:00pm – 8:30pm
Saturday, October 18 7:00am – 8:30pm
Sunday, October 19 7:00am – 6:00pm

For tickets and details, visit CarolinaBalloonFest.com and join us at facebook.com/carolinaballoonfest.

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