



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Lake Lanier Olympic Venue to Host 2003 Canoe/Kayak World Championships**

*Athletes from 78 Nations and Thousands of Fans to Converge on Gainesville in  
September for First Event of Its Kind in United States*

*Event and Opening Ceremony Tickets Now Available at [LanierCanoe2003.com](http://LanierCanoe2003.com)*

GAINESVILLE, Ga., Aug. 11, 2003 – Ten years after it was selected as a venue for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, Gainesville, Georgia is welcoming the world back. The Lake Lanier Olympic Center, which has become a thriving hub for the sport of flatwater canoe/kayak since the '96 Games, will host the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Canoe Federation Flatwater Racing World Championships Sept. 10-14, 2003.

The event will be the first canoe/kayak World Championships ever held in the United States and is the major qualifying event for the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. It is expected to draw approximately 2,000 spectators a day from the United States and abroad. More than 1,000 athletes and officials from 78 nations will be in attendance, making the event the largest canoe/kayak world championships ever in terms of the number of participating countries. To prepare for the event, the Olympic Center is undergoing a \$1.4 million renovation project to update and expand the existing facility.

### **A Living Olympic Legacy**

“The Lake Lanier Olympic Center is the living legacy of the Atlanta Olympics,” said Connie Hagler, executive director of Lanier Canoe 2003, organizers of the upcoming World Championships. “Community support for this facility and for this sport has been overwhelming. In a way, it’s like the Olympics never left.”

The upcoming World Championships solidify the Lake Lanier Olympic Center’s status as a world-class racing site and is a culmination of years of work by supporters of the facility. Since the '96 Olympics, the Gainesville community has embraced the sport of flatwater racing and the Lanier Canoe and Kayak Club has grown to become the largest sprint canoe/kayak program in the United States, winning national club titles in 1999, 2000 and 2002.

“The Lake Lanier venue was spectacular during the 1996 Olympics, so we are thrilled that it will be hosting the World Championships this year,” said John Leukemans of the International Canoe Federation.

### **Building on the Olympic Legacy**

The renovation project, funded by the City of Gainesville, Hall County and the State of Georgia through the Lake Lanier Islands Development Authority and the Centennial Legacy Foundation, includes plans for a paved plaza, a new VIP room in the timing tower that will also be a tribute to the 1996 Olympics, a bathhouse, permanent seating for more than 1,600 spectators and temporary seating for an additional 1,000. Once complete, the venue not only will accommodate

the thousands of athletes, officials, coaches, media and spectators coming to the World Championships, but it also will serve as an outdoor amphitheatre for concerts and other special community events for many years to come.

“The people of Gainesville and Hall County created one of the best venues of the 1996 Olympic Games, and it has been inspiring to watch them foster that creation year after year for the betterment of their community,” said Billy Payne, President and CEO of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games. “Now, the world is returning to Gainesville once again to compete, proving this Olympic venue is still a special place.”

### **Opening Ceremonies to Set Stage**

The reputation Gainesville earned as a first-rate competition host in 1996 will be proven once again during the opening ceremonies celebration on Sept. 10 at the Georgia Mountain Center. A procession of athletes and coaches from all over the world will kick off the event with the showing of colors from the 78 nations competing. Following the procession, musical performances by a spectrum of artists including the Gainesville Symphony will interpret the best in regional music while dancers, acrobats and aerialists put on what can only be described as a Cirque-like performance amid a dazzling light show.

The lobby will open at 5 p.m. and the celebration will begin promptly at 6 p.m. After doors open, Georgian singer/songwriter Jennifer Daniels will perform in the lobby to greet attendees with a signature mixture of Celtic roots-music and earthy folk-rock. Tickets are \$25 per person, available online at [www.LanierCanoe2003.org](http://www.LanierCanoe2003.org) or at the Mountain Center Box Office by calling (770) 534-8420. An opening ceremonies pass is included with the purchase of a four-day VIP ticket (see “Tickets” below). The Georgia Mountain Center is located at 301 Main Street in downtown Gainesville.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

Not surprisingly, the largest canoe/kayak World Championships on record requires extensive staff support. The organizing committee is calling on residents of Gainesville and surrounding communities, including metro Atlanta, to take part in the historic event. Translators are in high demand, especially those fluent in the following languages: Chinese, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. For information on being a translator, contact Eduardo Noriega at (706) 425-8444. For other volunteer opportunities, contact Tracey Kell at (770) 287-1798.

### **Tickets**

Tickets for the World Championships are available to the general public for the following prices:

- Tickets to All Events: \$75 (General Admission), \$275 (VIP)
- Day of Event Tickets:
  - Thursday: \$15 (General Admission), \$75 (VIP)
  - Friday: \$15 (General Admission), \$75 (VIP)
  - Saturday: \$25 (General Admission), \$100 (VIP)
  - Sunday: \$25 (General Admission), \$100 (VIP)

### **Media Accreditation**

All media interested in attending the World Championships must apply for and receive accreditation. To apply online or download an application, visit [www.LanierCanoe2003.org](http://www.LanierCanoe2003.org). Applications are due no later than Sept. 3, 2003. Media seeking accommodations during the event are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the official accommodations packages, which will provide transportation between Gainesville and Hartsfield International Airport, and between the competition venue and the lodging facilities.

More information about the 33<sup>rd</sup> International Canoe Federation Flatwater Racing World Championships, including schedule of events, participating nations, team registration, accommodations and transportation is available online at [www.LanierCanoe2003.org](http://www.LanierCanoe2003.org).

A number of official sponsors have been vital to financing and organizing the event, including: A.G. Edwards; BellSouth; Carolina Skiff; Centennial Legacy Foundation; DTNet; Enterprise Rent-A-Car; Georgia Power; Georgia Printing Company; Honda Marine; Hussey, Gay, Bell, & DeYoung International, Inc.; Jacobs Media; Jackson Spalding Communications; McGarities/Xerox; Milton Martin Honda; Northeast Georgia Medical Center and Health System; Stichtech; The Times; TSI Sports; Tyson; United States Olympic Committee and Up in Cumming.

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