**Media Contact:**

Landdis Hollifield

828-625-9611 ext. \*814

828-772-0052 (Cell)

prandevents@chimneyrockpark.com

**For Immediate Release:**

Chimney Rock celebrates 10 years as a State Park

Tin for Ten Anniversary to benefit local food pantry

Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park will celebrate a milestone on Sunday, May 21-- the Park’s 10th Anniversary as a State Park.

Instead of accepting gifts made from tin or aluminum--the traditional metals given for the 10th anniversary—the Park will collect canned items for Hickory Nut Gorge Outreach.

In 2004, the Morse Family began exploring the possibility of selling Chimney Rock Park because of rising real estate values, a growing concern over estate tax issues and the increased pressures of operating a century-old family business.

By 2006, negotiations with the State of North Carolina had begun and on May 21, 2007 the final deal was signed.

Many improvements and several thousand acres have been added to the Park since its purchase, something Chimney Rock State Park Superintendent James Ledgerwood is proud to share.

“Over the past 10 years the park has grown from 1,568-acres to 6,892-acres,” said Ledgerwood.  “The state has wasted no time or effort in continuing to preserve the natural heritage of Hickory Nut Gorge.  From protecting land, to improved parking areas and facilities, to building new trails and creating new recreational activities, the park continues to move forward with one vision.  With the Master Plan as our guide and the general public as our advocate, Chimney Rock State Park will continue to protect and provide the recreational resources that our visitors value and expect within our North Carolina State Park System.”

To celebrate a decade of growth and improvement, tickets to the park on Sunday, May 21, will be just $10 for adults who donate a can or box of food at the Ticket Plaza.

Items needed by Hickory Nut Gorge Outreach Food Pantry include such things as canned tuna and chicken, peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, and Chunky soup.

At 10 a.m. the Park’s shindig will kick-off at the Hickory Nut Falls trailhead. Interested visitors are invited to take a guided hike to one of the Park’s gems—Hickory Nut Falls—and enjoy a lesson on the Park’s history, something on which North Carolina Parks Director Mike Murphy recently reflected.

"The Chimney Rock attraction continues to be the centerpiece of what is becoming another crown jewel among North Carolina State Parks. It has a long and fascinating history and is a much-beloved landmark in western North Carolina.”  said Murphy. "The management by Chimney Rock Mgt., LLC allowed us to integrate this landmark seamlessly and relatively quickly into the state parks system and into our mission of recreation, conservation and education.”

Those that arrive a little later in the day will be able to enjoy the music of dulcimer player John Mason’s latest CD “Here Comes the Sun.” Mason has played at the Park for more than 20 years and looks forward to sharing his new CDs with visitors.

“I can remember when I first came to Chimney Rock I was selling cassette tapes,” said Mason. “That tells you how long I’ve been playing in the Park. My new CD is different than anything else I’ve done. It features cover songs from the ‘60s and ‘70s. It’s something that everyone can sing along to.”

Because no party is complete without cake, at noon on Sunday, May 21, the Park will provide guests with something sweet outside of Cliff Dweller’s Gift Shop at noon.

Those that receive the discounted price for helping the Outreach can upgrade to an Annual Pass for just $13 more. Annual Passholders receive unlimited admission to the Park for 18 months (extended from 12 months since the elevator is out of service) and can attend exclusive passholder events.

Todd Morse, former Chimney Rock Park President and General Manager, is glad his family made the decision to sell to the State because of their efforts to preserve and share the land with the public.

“I’m really glad we were able to work out a deal with the state,” said Morse. “It really assured us that the property would be protected and people would have access to the Park forever. And that our staff would be able to continue to work at this wonderful place they loved.”

For the latest news on Chimney Rock’s Tin for Ten Anniversary, visit chimneyrockpark.com or facebook.com/chimneyrockparknc**.**

**Want to approach this story in a different way?**

Contact Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park for additional resources and interviews your media outlet needs to make this story uniquely yours. Whether you want to approach our upcoming anniversary in a more nostalgic, retrospective way by talking with the Morse Family, through those that frequent the Park and have grown to love it over the years, or through North Carolina State Park’s eyes, we can connect you with the resources you need.

 **About Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park**

[Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park](http://chimneyrockpark.com/index.php) is a still-developing international outdoor destination located 25 miles southeast of Asheville on Highway 64/74A in Chimney Rock, N.C. It is recognized as one of the Southeast’s most iconic sites and popular travel destinations. The Park’s 535-million-year-old monolith called Chimney Rock can be accessed via the 500-step Outcroppings Trail and offers guests 75-mile panoramic views of Hickory Nut Gorge and Lake Lure. The Park features one of the highest waterfalls of its kind east of the Mississippi River, Hickory Nut Falls, at 404 feet. Hickory Nut Gorge, one of the state’s most significant centers of biodiversity, is home to 36 rare plant species and 14 rare animal species. The Rumbling Bald section of the greater State Park off of Boys Camp Road in Chimney Rock is the only other area of the Park that is currently open to the public. A destination for travel groups, weddings and special events, the Chimney Rock section of the Park also hosts innovative [educational programs](http://chimneyrockpark.com/education/) for schools, homeschoolers, scouts and summer camps. Visit Chimney Rock’s website at [chimneyrockpark.com](http://www.chimneyrockpark.com).