

# MILK & HONEY



*McCutcheon at the National Storytelling Festival, 2012*



## SONGS & STORIES

*In Honor of Helen Lewis*

Johnny Cash called him the “most impressive instrumentalist” he’d ever heard. Indeed, he plays myriad instruments—from the banjo to the octave mandolin to the nyckelharpa—but he is so much more.

**John McCutcheon’s** blog postings carry titles such as “Random Acts of Outrage” and “Picket Line Etiquette”; his lyrics tell stories of people and places that need to be told. He doesn’t shy away from the hard stuff; poetically, he raises our consciousness and infiltrates our conscience. At once storyteller and musician, McCutcheon blends the two seamlessly to edify and entertain. And while he is an entity

unto himself, his collaborative partners include an impressive string of knowns from all walks, from *New York Times* bestselling novelist Barbara Kingsolver to the late, great Pete Seeger.

Five-time Grammy nominee, master of the hammered dulcimer, headliner at festivals across the USA, author, teacher...you won’t want to miss this performance by our friend John McCutcheon. A special surprise will launch the show. Bring a friend...can’t wait to see you there! —*JJJ*

**JOHN MCCUTCHEON \* SATURDAY, JANUARY 31ST AT 7 P.M.**

Ellijay High School Auditorium \* 408 Bobcat Trail, Ellijay, GA 30540

## A Christmas Toy Story

It was 6:48 a.m. when my cell phone rang—an early enough hour to evoke panic: Had the Story Express broken down on the way to a school? Was the Center on fire? Instead...

“Julie?” said a breathless Connie, one of our arts specialists. “A new wooden truck toy broke yesterday and the little boy was crying and he’s a foster child about to be moved (again) right before Christmas and this time to another county and all he wants is that truck!” *Whew!*

“What?” I asked, trying to shake the fog from my brain in order to follow this unexpected but clearly urgent situation. Connie repeated the tale.

*Readers, don’t forget what we do that you make possible...as per the Craddocks’ vision, our arts specialists traverse mountains and cross three states to deliver songs and stories to our children. But only once per week. Connie would not see this classroom of children again for another two weeks...and this little boy? Possibly never again.*

“Find me that truck and I’ll go back and get it to him,” Connie implored. “The teacher is beside herself; she said she’d drive to Cherry Log if she had to.”

“But *which* truck, Connie? Our toymakers make (cont’d on next page)

## BY the numbers



**2260**

hats distributed to warm big & little heads in 2014

special places where hats

were given away

**10**



**56**

preschool classrooms where hats were given away

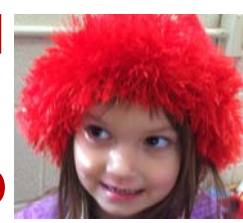
individuals + knitting groups

**21**

+

making hats for our children

**10**



**31**

volunteers putting hats on heads

### Did Jesus Ever Dance?

Wow! Big question from a small boy.

What brought that on?

We had a preacher in school assembly today and he warned us about doing bad things. He had a long list of sins but the one he talked about the most was ‘Dancing’.

That seems strange. Has Dancing been a problem at school?

No Ma’am. Not for me. I like seeing Daddy have Sister stand on his feet while they sing around the room. And I like it when you and Daddy stop what you are doing and dance to a song on the radio. What did that preacher think was wrong with that?

If I had known then what I know now, I would have shut him up for good. For instance, Jesus taught about people whose religion was so confused and miserable that “We played the flute for you and you did not dance” (Luke 7). And I have almost memorized the story of the prodigal son who returned home and was welcomed with music and dancing (Luke 15). Of course, his older brother was mad about it and refused to dance. Like that preacher.

Suddenly, I remembered a dance that was so beautiful that I still cry when I think about it. My family and I were in Lexington, Ky. and took advantage of the time to drive out to the village that had been home to an unusual community of Christians called Shakers. An unusual activity during their gatherings was to dance. They filled the gathering place and all danced to familiar hymns. A signature song, “The Gift to be Simple”, told of love, light, simplicity and turning freely. But now the buildings are empty and the people gone. Except for one; a quiet young woman whose life was to recite the story of these people, during which she danced and sang. It was worship not to God but with God. When she finished, she left the room, and eventually, so did we.

I know now why the preacher was so opposed to dancing. It was about 10 years later that the subject arose and it was my mother who rather casually mentioned it. “I know why,” she said. “Then tell us.” “Because he did not know how.” —FBC



### Preaching Workshop!

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

MONDAY, MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup> | 9 A.M. TO NOON

You won’t want to miss this Preaching Workshop led by Old Testament scholar, the Rev. Dr. **Kathleen M. O’Connor**, Professor Emerita, Columbia Theological Seminary. Please on attending at...yes, our **new** location: 186 Fred Craddock Drive! More details to follow.

We extend a special invitation to Appalachian-area preachers. As always, seating is limited, so registration is required. The workshop is free, and breakfast and lunch will be served. *Please spread the word and bring a colleague!*

Register online: [craddockcenter.eventbrite.com](http://craddockcenter.eventbrite.com)



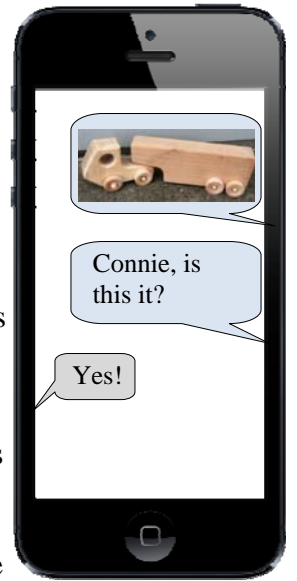
### Toy (continued from previous page)

several models! Give me time this morning. Abby and I will go through all of the boxes and pull all of the trucks. Can I text you a photo of them? Where can I meet you later?” We devised a scheme involving a drop off at the high school gym where Connie’s daughter would be having basketball practice that evening. Connie would deliver it to the teacher who knew where the little boy would spend one more night.

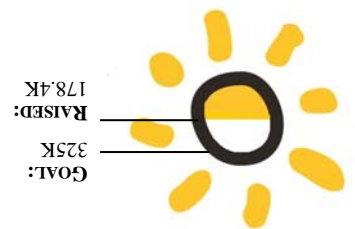
At the office, Abby and I began going through the yet undistributed boxes of toys, pulling out all varieties of truck. I texted Connie a photo; we were set!

The wished for toy was delivered among some tears and emotion with the help of at least six adults. We like to think it wasn’t the only thing this child received for Christmas, but it may have been among the things most filled with the spirit of the season.

Special thanks to the Toymakers of East Lake UMC (Palm Harbor, FL) and of St. Luke’s UMC (Houston, TX). You made this story possible. —JJJ



### Over halfway... Are you with us?



GOAL: 325K  
RAISED: 178.4K



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