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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN, COURTESY OF THE MONTHAVEN
ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTER IN HENDERSONVILLE, TENN.**

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. (Oct. 31, 2023) – Monthaven Arts and Cultural Center rings in the holidays with some of renowned Tennessee artist Ralph J. McDonald’s paintings of Jolly Old St. Nicholas. The exhibition, titled *Magic of Santa: Paintings by Ralph J. McDonald*, will run **Nov. 18 2023 to Jan. 7, 2024** and feature more than 35 of McDonald’s Yuletide paintings. The arrival of his work heralds a season of celebration that will include music performances and the ceremonial lighting of the MACC’s 25-foot outdoor Christmas tree.

“I am simply overjoyed to showcase the paintings of Ralph J. McDonald at Monthaven,” says Cheryl Strichik, the MACC’s executive director. His paintings capture Santa’s inherent sense of joy and generosity, and they are guaranteed to get you into the holiday spirit.”

McDonald was already a renowned wildlife artist before he created his first Santa Clause painting. That work, titled “A Christmas Party,” was inspired by a trip through Cades Cove in the Smoky Mountains on a snowy winter day. It was painted in the tradition of the Santa painters that McDonald most admired, such as Haddon Sundblom, Norman Rockwell and N.C. Wyeth. Not surprisingly, McDonald’s love of nature finds its way into many of his Santa paintings. The details of each scene all work together to emit kindness, joy, laughter, peace and serenity.

As a wildlife artist, McDonald's career is second to none. He was commissioned by the governor of Tennessee to paint the official state bird, the mockingbird, and by the governor of South Carolina to paint the state animal and fish, the whitetail deer and striped bass. McDonald has twice been Featured Artist in several of the most prestigious wildlife art shows in America, among them the Southeastern Wildlife Expo and World Wildlife Expo.

The opening of *Magic of Santa*, from 6 to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023, coincides with this year's **Christmas Tree Elegance**. Five stylish, seven-foot Christmas Trees, donated by Vickman Company, are gorgeously decorated by noted designers. Each tree is uniquely appointed to match a particular theme. Trees are also embellished with gifts and sold through a silent auction. All proceeds support the MACC's arts education and outreach activities.

Other holiday happenings at the MACC include:

- **Merry Monthaven Christmas** (4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 3): This popular annual event features the lighting of the MACC's outdoor Christmas tree along with performances by the Hendersonville High School Jazz Vocal Ensemble and special Christmas performance by Cole Ritter and the Night Owls.
- **Appalachian Road Show** (2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 17): This visionary acoustic ensemble will perform in an intimate, Bluebird Café-like setting at the MACC.

Monthaven Arts and Cultural Center (MACC) is a jewel-box art museum and education facility housed in one of Tennessee's most spectacular antebellum mansions. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the MACC has staged exhibitions featuring everything from the ceramic art of Pablo Picasso to the evening gowns of Princess Diana. The artwork of local artists and military veterans are also on frequent display. As an art school, the MACC offers classes to more than 800 children and adults each year. The MACC also provides free arts outreach and healing arts to underserved children, families and military veterans. For more information, visit www.monthavenarts.org or call (615) 822-0789.

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