

American Legion World Series 2016 in planning stages

Program marks 90th anniversary

American Legion Baseball celebrates the 90th American Legion World Series (ALWS) with the 2016 six-day tournament scheduled for Aug. 11-16 in Shelby-Cleveland County. Shelby High School's Keeter Stadium has been the official home for the ALWS since 2011.

Cleveland County ALWS Baseball Inc., the nonprofit organization responsible for planning and implementing the 15-game series and related special events, has begun planning sessions. The 90th anniversary logo is appearing already on local signs, in printed materials and in advertising.

The official kickoff for the ALWS is the 4th Annual 7th Inning Stretch Festival on Saturday, Aug. 6, in Uptown Shelby. The Festival will showcase a nationally known artist to be announced later. The Festival will again feature a morning 5K walk and run; games for all ages, displays and food by various vendors and the free concert will take place from 1-9:30 p.m. North Carolinian Kellie Pickler, an "American Idol" favorite and "Dancing with the Stars" winner, entertained an estimated audience of 15,000 for the 2015 evening concert.

National American Legion officials, veterans and sponsors will be honored and entertained at the National Commander's Reception on Tuesday, Aug. 9, at LeGrand Center. National Commander Dale Barnett of Georgia and National Auxiliary President Sharon Conatser will participate.

The eight teams competing for the national title also arrive Aug. 9 and will be presented to the public in a Parade of Champions during the Celebration of Champions on Wednesday, Aug. 10, at Keeter Stadium. The Celebration includes a concert by an award-winning artist; tickets for the public will be \$25 each.

In addition to the players, this year's games will pay tribute to many baseball fans. Senior citizens will be admitted free on opening day, Aug. 11, for all three games. Friday, Aug. 12, will be Salute to Academic Achievement Day. Saturday, Aug. 13, will be Youth Athletic Day and youth wearing athletic jerseys for any sport will be admitted free. Sunday (Aug. 14) will be the traditional Military Appreciation Day with USAA as the principal sponsor. The N.C. American Legion Riders will make a showing before the 1 p.m. game; veterans from all branches of service will be honored on the field before the 4 p.m. game; and Vietnam War veteran and Medal of Honor Recipient James Taylor will be recognized before the 7:30 p.m. game. Monday, Aug. 15, the day the semifinal winners will be decided, will be Teacher Appreciation Day. The Championship is set for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 16.

As in 2015, the Semifinals and the Championship will air live on national television via ESPNU. Games 1-12 will be web-streamed live on ESPN3. General admission tickets that cover all 15 games go on sale April 1 through www.americanlegionworldseries.com.