

JULY 26, 2010



Contact: Jennifer Bauer, park manager (423) 543-5808

Honeycutt takes 'Liberty!' stage with poise, charm

ELIZABETHTON – There are smiles that light up a room, and then there are smiles that do the same for an entire stage.

Heather Honeycutt has one that can do both, and puts it to good use in *Liberty!*, the Official Outdoor Drama of Tennessee, that continues its 2010 season through July 31 with performances Thursdays through Saturdays beginning nightly at 7:30 in the Fort Watauga Amphitheater at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area.

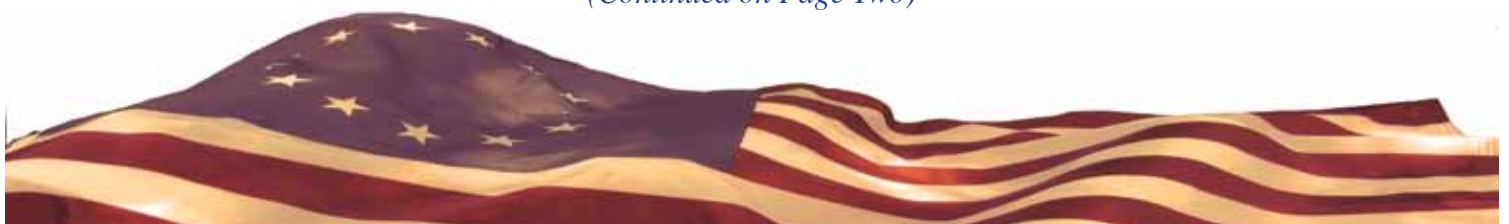
The 17-year-old is returning for her sixth season, portraying Elizabeth MacLin, the beautiful young frontier woman who caught the eye of young Landon Carter. The two would marry and rise to great prominence – he the namesake of a county, and she of a town.



Heather Honeycutt, left, teams up her dad, Norm, and mom, Leisa, to create a longtime 'Liberty! family.'

A rising senior at Happy Valley High School, Heather enjoys sewing, acting, reading and playing basketball. She says participation in the drama has also drawn her to a career choice: Heather has decided she wants to be a teacher, to make sure other young people don't miss out on the great stories

(Continued on Page Two)





(continued from Page One)

of early America.

“Before I became a part of *Liberty!*, I knew nothing about my own hometown’s history and I thought that was a shame. All those years of history classes and I can’t remember reading anything about the Overmountain Men or the Watauga Association.

“It’s not that students don’t want to know. It’s almost as if they’ve been brain-washed by what they’ve been taught in school, and that they think there is nothing else, nothing more to the story,” Heather said.

“As a U.S. history teacher, I would like to teach students about the area in which they live. So many people are just as oblivious as I was to the wonderful and important things that happened right here on the ground they travel every single day.”



Heather Honeycutt, center, portraying Elizabeth MacLin, the namesake of Elizabethton, tells the story of the Overmountain Men in Nashville.

A native of Eustis, Fla., Heather and her parents,

Norm and Leisa, moved to Elizabethton when she was just shortly into her second year of life, so her memories of “home” center largely around Northeast Tennessee.

“In 2005, I took part in a play that a group of home-schooled students put on called ‘A Salute to America.’ We all had to choose influential people in history to portray and give information about.

“While I was in costume, my mother and I saw a man at the store who struck up a conversation and told me that he thought I would be interested in the drama at Sycamore Shoals. I later learned that man was Richard Tittle. I started to keep an eye out for auditions.

(Continued on Page Three)



(continued from Page Two)

“After the first year, I learned an incredible amount of local history that I didn’t know and had met too many wonderful people not to come back the next year. The same pattern continues each year, and I’m sure it will until I’m old and gray, God willing,” Heather said.

The Honeycutts returned to Florida in September, 2006, living in Belleview for almost two years. Each summer, they made the trek back to Tennessee so that Heather could participate in the drama. “There was just no way that we could not do that,” Leisa says. “Heather loves it too much. It means so much to her.”

“This is a very welcoming place,” Heather says. “I haven’t met a single person who wasn’t welcoming to me. I’m very happy to be here with these people.” Happily for Heather, her family returned to her beloved hills in May, 2008. She uses a line from one of the songs in the show: “We’re here to stay.”

The Honeycutts are an example of what Jennifer Bauer, manager of Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area, calls “*Liberty!* families.” Leisa has spent many hours at a sewing machine, volunteering to help make costuming for the drama. At any given time, Norm is helping with any work that needs to be done.

“Each winter, our *Liberty!* families come back together for auditions and rehearsals. One by one, so many eager, smiling faces return to the park: children, adults, mothers and fathers. Some of the children and teens joined the drama when they were literally babies in their mothers’ arms,” Bauer said.

“Many of the adults return, remembering when they were cast members as a child. It is emotionally overwhelming,



Veteran cast member Richard Tittle, left, was instrumental in encouraging Heather Honeycutt, to join the cast of *Liberty!*.

(Continued on Page Four)



(continued from Page Three)

knowing just how important it is to so many of them – to share this story of their home, and their ancestors, with the many guests that come to Sycamore Shoals to hear it.

“Through their sacrifice of time and hard work, they help create a monumental production, and honor those whose stories they tell, and ensure their efforts are never forgotten,” Bauer said.

“Without our *Liberty!* families, like the Honeycutts, and volunteers, the drama could not possibly take place. All these wonderful folks are the heart and soul of our story – one of the most important stories in our nation’s history.”

Heather was selected to the first face seen by the audience when *Liberty!* traveled to Nashville in October to headline the Tennessee History Festival.

“There’s an old saying in theater about ‘taking the stage,’” says veteran drama producer Jon Ruetz. “Let me tell you: In 40 years of watching and participating in theater, I’ve never seen anyone take the stage like Heather did in Nashville.”

“She walked out in front of a standing-room-only crowd, far from the comfort of Elizabethton, full of poise and grace. I’ve never seen more emotion and charm in six little words than when she came onstage and commenced with ‘Let me tell you a story...’ It was an unforgettable moment. Our Northeast Tennessee home could not have had a better representative.”

Heather believes her character was “very dignified, ladylike. Portraying Elizabeth has helped me be more cognizant of our history, and our responsibilities as citizens. I’ve learned so much.”

“These people built the country that we know today. Their decisions and actions directly affect us. What would have happened if the brave men and women so many years ago had not believed in freedom so strongly?

What if the volunteers had not believed in fighting for it? We really do owe these people everything, and they deserve to be honored.”



Heather Honeycutt
portraying Elizabeth MacLin,
namesake of Elizabethton

(continued on Page Five)



(continued from Page Four)

Heather says her favorite part of the drama is “the time right before and after the men go off to King’s Mountain,” where they would win a surprising victory at a dark hour in the struggle for American freedom. “It’s so emotional, something I never really understood on a personal level until I did this. I have gained and grown so much thanks to being here.

“These people built the country that we know today,” Heather said. “Their decisions and actions directly affect us. What would have happened if the brave men and women so many years ago had not believed in freedom so strongly? What if the many volunteers had not believed in fighting for it? We really do owe these people everything, and they deserve to be honored.”

(Liberty! runs Thursdays-Saturdays, through July 31, in the Fort Watauga Amphitheater at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area in Elizabethton. Performances begin nightly at 7:30. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$8 for students. Children 5 and under are admitted free. For more information, call SSSHA at [423] 543-5808) or visit www.liberty-drama.com).

(END)