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For Immediate Release

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From the Ground Up – the Journey from Journalist to Potter

Seagrove, N.C. – Michael Mahan, owner and potter, at From the Ground Up pottery, admitted that in college he didn't really like to study. He was on the track team for the first year and half, but then developed shin splints, "so I had to find something else to do to keep me occupied rather than having to study", he said with a laugh. "I got an A in English Composition and Writing, so I got a job with the school newspaper". Michael then had the opportunity to do an internship with a newspaper in Monroe, NC, where he did a series of stories on potters. That is what got him interested in pottery. From there he then went back to college, and spent some time at the Craft Center at NC State. He had a friend that was a photographer on staff at the newspaper in Asheboro, so he asked him about getting a job there too. He did get hired, and eventually he covered the Seagrove area and the potter community, for the newspaper. His interest in pottery was more than just as a journalist, so at night he took pottery classes at Montgomery County Community College. He had decided to become a full time potter.

He originally started his business, and actually constructed the buildings on Hwy 705 where Blaine and Laura Avery most recently had their pottery studios. He built that location from some old log homes that he moved there. From there he moved to his current location in the Whynot region near Seagrove, where he has been for 10 years. Michael and his wife Mary have spent a lot of time remodeling the original structures on the property, so they could house their retail shop and studios. One day while he and his son were walking in the woods on the property, they came across some salt-glazed pottery shards. The name W.J. Stewart was stamped on the bottom of them. After a bit of research, they found out that he was a potter that had lived there in the 1890's, and still has some relatives living in the area.

Michael Mahan is known for his unique pottery shapes, including his pottery bells. The bells came about from a mistake that he made with a bowl. He decided to turn the bowl over, make a larger hole in the bottom of it, and use it as a bell. The bells, when gently struck on the outside, have a rich tone to them, which is due to the clay from which they are made. "It almost turns more glasslike; that gives it more of a ring. It is from High-water. It is earthen red", he explained.

He is also known for his images of trees that are set into his pottery pieces. Those images were originally created from a request from a long distance runners club. They host events that include running through the Uwharrie mountain area. They asked him at one time to create a series of awards made from clay to commemorate the event. Michael created a stamp with a tree on it, which he then pressed onto the outside of the pottery awards. He also created an image of a runner, and of the sun to go around the

runner. They became so popular that he now uses the tree motif for many different pottery pieces that he creates. He makes very large round platters with the tree image stamped onto them all the way around. They can be used as a wall hanging, or supported by a pedestal to be used as a birdbath.

Michael has continued with the tree theme to also include many Celtic images on his functional serving ware that he creates. "Trees were revered by the ancient Celts. Each letter in their alphabet, and in their calendar had a corresponding tree associated with it. They also had a triple spiral symbol, which I use in the middle of my pieces. It represents the underworld, the middle world, and the upper world, which corresponds to the roots, the trunk, and the branches of a tree". Michael applies the triple spiral symbol to many of his mugs and cups. And if you ask him, Michael will play a Celtic tune for you on his hand made flute made from a recycled metal curtain rod!

For more information regarding From the Ground Up pottery by Michael Mahan, including directions and hours that his studio will be open, please go to his website at www.fromthegrounduppots.com, or call him at (910) 464-6228.

For a listing of all of the members and the events presented by the Seagrove Area Potters Association (SAPA), please go to www.discoverseagrove.com. Explore America's largest community of working potters. Discover Seagrove.

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