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Cultural Heritage Center to participate in Blue Star Museums program

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre has announced its participation this summer in the Blue Star Museums program.

Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense and more than 1,800 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2013.

The free-admission program is available to any bearer of a Geneva Convention common access card (CAC), a DD Form 1173 ID card, or a DD Form 1173-1 ID card, which includes active duty U.S. military -- Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, as well as members of the National Guard and Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps -- and up to five family members.

“We are delighted to participate in the Blue Star Museums program again in 2013,” commented Jay Smith, director of the Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center. “It is a great way for us to honor the dedication of those serving in the military as well as the many sacrifices their families make. We hope that many service men and women come visit us at the Cultural Heritage Center and enjoy the exhibits and programs that demonstrate the history and culture of South Dakota.”

Smith added that, also from Memorial Day through Labor Day, the Cultural Heritage Center will be open extended hours for visitors. Museum hours are 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. CDT Monday-Saturday, and 1-4:30 p.m. Sundays and holidays.

“Blue Star Museums is collaboration between the arts and military communities,” said NEA Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa. “Our work with Blue Star Families and with more than 1,800 museums ensures that we can reach out to military families and thank them for their service and sacrifice.”

“Blue Star Museums is something that service members and their families look forward to every year and we are thrilled with the continued growth of the program,” said Blue Star Families CEO Kathy Roth-Douquet. “Through this distinctive collaboration between Blue Star Families, the National Endowment for the Arts and more than 1,800 museums across the United States, service members and their families can connect with our national treasures with this unparalleled opportunity to visit some of the country’s finest museums for free.”

This year, more than 1,800 (and counting) museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and American Samoa are taking part in the initiative, including more than 450 new museums.

This year's Blue Star Museums represent not just fine arts museums, but also science museums, history museums, nature centers and 75 children's museums.

Other museums in South Dakota offering free admission through Blue Star Museums have included the Adams Museum & Historic Adams House in Deadwood; the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery & Archives and the High Plains Western Heritage Center in Spearfish; the Heritage Center at Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge; the Journey Museum in Rapid City; the Old Courthouse Museum and the Pettigrew Home & Museum in Sioux Falls; the Prehistoric Indian Village in Mitchell; and the South Dakota Art Museum in Brookings.

The complete list of participating museums is available at www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Museums are welcome to join Blue Star Museums throughout the summer. Other museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact bluestarmuseums@arts.gov, or Wendy Clark at 202-682-5451.

The effort to recruit museums has involved partnerships with the American Association of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Association of Children's Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, and the Association of Science-Technology Centers. Leadership support has been provided by MetLife Foundation through Blue Star Families.

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.