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Sept. 15 Smithsonian Program at Cultural Heritage Center to discuss bringing museum objects to life

PIERRE, S.D. – Those attending the monthly Smithsonian Night program of the Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society on Tuesday, Sept. 15, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre will learn how the Smithsonian Institution prepares objects for exhibition.

The featured video program at 7 p.m. CDT is entitled, “Bringing an Object to Life” from the Smithsonian’s National Air & Space Museum.

The presentation focuses on how the Air & Space Museum staff work with an artifact from collection to exhibit. The featured artifact is astronaut Gene Cernan’s Oxygen Purge System. After his Apollo 17 moonwalk, Gene Cernan returned the artifact to Earth, and NASA sealed it in a package just weeks after the mission’s completion. For decades, it sat untouched and virtually unknown in museum storage until it was rediscovered in 2013 and became a candidate for the “Outside the Spacecraft: Fifty Years of Extra-Vehicular Activity” exhibition.

This “What’s New in Aerospace?” program, originally broadcast Jan. 20, will not only tell the story of the inclusion of the object in the exhibition, but also look at how museum conservator Lisa Young examined and prepared the object for display using microscopic examination of the materials. The exhibition’s curator, Jennifer Levasseur, and a representative from the United Technologies Corporation will also talk about the design and construction of life support systems for work outside the spacecraft.

“This is a great multimedia program that brings space history and museum work together,” said Jay Smith, museum director for the South Dakota State Historical Society. “Preserving space history is fraught with difficulties and additional uncertainties that provides for a lively and entertaining evening program.”

Smithsonian Night programs are typically held the third Tuesday of each month. On these days, the Museum and Heritage Store at the Cultural Heritage Center are open from 9 a.m.-8 p.m., giving visitors additional time in the early evening to visit the facility. There is no fee to view the program in the education room, but standard admission fees apply for visitors wanting to go into the museum galleries.

The South Dakota State Historical Society became a Smithsonian Affiliate in January 2013 and is the only affiliate in South Dakota.

About the South Dakota State Historical Society

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, 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.

About Smithsonian Affiliations

Established in 1996, Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. The long-term goal of Smithsonian Affiliations is to facilitate a two-way relationship among Affiliate organizations and the Smithsonian Institution to increase discovery and inspire lifelong learning in communities across America. More information about the Smithsonian Affiliations program and Affiliate activity is available at <https://affiliations.si.edu>.