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Cultural Heritage Center participating in Blue Star Museums program

PIERRE, S.D. -- The South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre is continuing its participation in the Blue Star Museums program in 2017.

The program is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense and more than 2,000 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

“We are delighted to participate in the Blue Star Families program again in 2017,” said 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.”

This year, more than 2,000 museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and American Samoa are taking part in the initiative. Museums are welcome to join Blue Star Museums throughout the summer.

Blue Star museums include art, children's, history, nature and science museums. The complete list of participating museums, including 11 in South Dakota, is available at www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Leadership support has been provided by MetLife Foundation through Blue Star Families.

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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 Blue Star Museums

Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 2,000 museums across

America. The program runs from Memorial Day, May 29, 2017, through Labor Day, Sept. 4, 2017.

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. Some special or limited-time museum exhibits may not be included in this free admission program. For questions on particular exhibits or museums, please contact the museum directly. To find out which museums are participating, visit www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums. The site includes a list of participating museums and a map to help with visit planning.

This is the latest NEA program to bring quality arts programs to the military, veterans and their families. Other NEA programs for the military have included the NEA/Walter Reed Healing Arts Partnership; Great American Voices Military Base Tour; and Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour.

About Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families is a national, nonprofit network of military families from all ranks and services, including guard and reserve, dedicated to supporting, connecting and empowering military families. With our partners, Blue Star Families hosts a robust array of morale and empowerment programs, including Books on Bases, Blue Star Museums, Operation Honor Corp, Blue Star Careers and Operation Appreciation. Blue Star Families also works directly with the Department of Defense and senior members of local, state and federal government to bring the most important military family issues to light. Working in concert with fellow nonprofits, community advocates and public officials, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life and works to make military life more sustainable. Our worldwide membership includes military spouses, children, parents and friends, as well as service members, veterans and civilians. To learn more about Blue Star Families, visit <http://www.bluestarfam.org>.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.