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Stanley County native to tell about her new book at history club

PIERRE –A South Dakota author will tell about her new book at the August meeting of the History and Heritage Book Club.

Brenda Donelan will lead the discussion of “Day of the Dead” when the book club meets at 7 p.m. Central Time on Tuesday, Aug. 12, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

“We’re pleased to have a life-long South Dakotan give us insight into her work. ‘Day of the Dead’ is a just-published mystery based on an incident in South Dakota’s history,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. The foundation is the nonprofit partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and sponsors the History and Heritage Book Club.

Donelan grew up in Stanley County, where her parents, Larry and Patty Donelan, have a cattle ranch. She graduated from Stanley County High School in Fort Pierre and received her bachelor’s degree, master’s degree and doctorate from South Dakota State University in Brookings.

Donelan was a professor at Northern State University in Aberdeen when a professor was found dead on campus.

“What happened at the campus on Northern inspired my story, but my story is very different than what happened. It’s about one-third based on fact, one-third exaggeration and one-third fabrication. I want to make sure people understand this is a work of fiction,” said Donelan, who currently lives in Sioux Falls.

Donelan’s book is told from the point of view of the protagonist who is a female criminal justice professor.

“The NSU professor’s death was ruled a suicide. I didn’t want my book to end that way. The biggest challenge was to figure out who did it and why,” Donelan said.

“Day of the Dead” is the first in a series of university mysteries by Donelan. She has started writing the second mystery in the series and anticipates that it will be published in early 2015.

“Day of the Dead” is sold at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol. Book club members receive a 10 percent discount, and South Dakota State Historical Society members receive an additional 5 percent discount, when they purchase the book at either Heritage Store.

For more information about the History and Heritage Book Club, call (605) 773-6006.

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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 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.