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October Smithsonian Night program features risk

PIERRE, S.D. – The Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society will host its monthly Smithsonian Night program on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The featured video program at 7 p.m. CDT is entitled “Are Americans Risk-Takers?” from the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History.

From 18th century political revolutionaries to the first dudes to skateboard down a half-pipe, Americans have risked life and limb in pursuit of greater glory. We are, by many rankings, among the most entrepreneurial people in the world. We place big bets and reap large rewards—or large losses. We also explore the deep seas and outer space. Not to mention that we'll go over Niagara Falls in barrels or walk across the Grand Canyon on a tightrope just to make news. Even our popular music—from jazz to freestyle rap—prizes improvisation and daring.

Do Americans really possess a propensity for risk—if so, what explains it, and how does it differ from that of other nations? Grammy Award-winning jazz pianist Arturo O’Farrill, “Adventure Divas” host Holly Morris, and Megan McArdle, author of “The Up Side of Down: Why Failing Well Is the Key to Success,” discuss risk and the American way.

The moderator of the program is Jack Hitt, author of “Bunch of Amateurs: A Search for the American Character.”

This program was originally broadcast March 31 and is part of the “What It Means to be an American” program series.

“This is a fascinating discussion about American society,” said Jay Smith, museum director for the State Historical Society. “The panelists provide some interesting responses that will certainly lead our audience to ask questions about what we think we know about the American character today and over time.”

On Smithsonian Night, the museum and Heritage Store at the Cultural Heritage Center will be open from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. CDT, giving visitors additional time in the early evening to visit the facility. There will be no fee to view the program, but standard admission fees will 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.

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>.