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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 participating in Blue Star Museums, 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 2015.

"We are delighted to participate in the Blue Star Families program again in 2015," said Jay Smith, director of the Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society. "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."

"Blue Star Museums is a collaboration between the arts and military communities," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "We're proud to help museums connect with military communities nationwide."

"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 2,000 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 2,000 (and counting) 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. The effort to recruit museums has involved partnerships with the American Alliance of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Association of Children's Museums, the American Association for State and Local History and the Association of Science-Technology Centers. Blue Star Museums include art museums, science museums, history museums, nature centers and children's museums.

Leadership support has been provided by MetLife Foundation through Blue Star Families. The complete list of participating museums is available at [www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums).

### **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](http://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 1,800 museums across America. The program runs from Memorial Day through Labor Day.*

*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](http://www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums). The site includes a list of participating museums and a map to help with visit planning.*

*Other museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact [bluestarmuseums@arts.gov](mailto:bluestarmuseums@arts.gov), or Wendy Clark at 202-682-5451.*

*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](https://www.arts.gov).*