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Stanley County Native to Discuss Newest Mystery at History Book Club

PIERRE, S.D. – Death is taking a field trip.

Stanley County native Brenda Donelan will discuss her novel “Murder to Go” at 7 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, Oct. 27, at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

“‘Murder to Go’ is the third novel in Donelan’s University Mystery Series,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. “Like her first two novels, Brenda incorporates her work experience as a college professor and federal probation officer with being a lifelong South Dakotan.”

The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and is sponsoring Donelan’s program as part of its History and Heritage Book Club. The talk and book signing afterward are free and everyone is welcome.

The protagonist is Marlee McCabe, a criminology professor at fictional Midwestern State University in fictional Elmwood, S.D. Unlike “Day of the Dead” and “Holiday Homicide,” much of the action takes place outside of Elmwood. In “Murder to Go,” a body is discovered in a motel room on the second day of a week-long class trip.

“I decided to take Marlee out on the road for ‘Murder to Go,’” Donelan said. “Elmwood is a fictional town of about 25,000 people, and I wanted to avoid death after death happening in that small town. Mystery writers actually refer to this as ‘Cabot Cove Syndrome,’ referencing the small town in ‘Murder She Wrote’ where Jessica Fletcher solved one or more murders, primarily in Cabot Cove, every week. This begins to defy believability after a while, so I chose to have Marlee lead a group of students through various prisons, halfway houses and juvenile facilities. This provided ample opportunity for a new mystery; one embedded within the class she’s teaching on the road.”

Donelan is the daughter of Larry and Patty Donelan of Stanley County. She attended college at South Dakota State University in Brookings and worked in Aberdeen as a probation officer and later as a college professor. She currently resides in Sioux Falls and is working on the fourth book in the University Mystery Series.

All three of Donelan’s books are sold at the Heritage Stores at the Cultural Heritage Center and the Capitol.

“Brenda has presented programs at the Cultural Heritage Center for each of her books. Her insights into the writing process and characters adds to readers’ enjoyment of the books,” Lewis said.

For more information, call (605) 773-6006.

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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 the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation

The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a private charitable nonprofit that seeks funding to assist the South Dakota State Historical Society in programming and projects to preserve South Dakota's history and heritage for future generations.