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CONTACT: Jeff Mammenga, Media Coordinator, (605) 773-6000,
jeff.mammenga@state.sd.us

Award-winning poet to read her work in Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. — Award-winning poet Sharon Chmielarz (SHMEE-larz) will present two programs in Pierre on Tuesday, July 7.

Chmielarz will be reading her poetry and signing copies of her books from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. CDT at Prairie Pages Bookseller, 321 S. Pierre St., and at 7 p.m. CDT at the Cultural Heritage Center, 900 Governors Dr.

“Pierre and Fort Pierre residents will hear Sharon reading poems about places very much like the one in which they live,” said Michael Lewis, president of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation. The foundation is the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society and is helping host Chmielarz.

Pierre and Fort Pierre residents also have another connection to the poet. The name of Prairie Pages co-owner Kathy Villa appears in one of Chmielarz’s poems, “Home Town 4th of July.” Chmielarz was a presenter at the South Dakota Festival of Books when one of the festival’s organizers asked presenters to donate an item for an auction. Chmielarz’s donation was to write the highest bidder’s name in a book or poem that would be published in the coming year. Villa was the winner.

“I’ve read that poem to many audiences and they really like it, so I’m hoping Kathy and Pierre people will, too,” Chmielarz said.

“Home Town 4th of July” appears in Chmielarz’s latest book, “Visibility: Ten Miles.” The book is a collection of Chmielarz’s poetry, accompanied by the photography of Ken Smith. The poet plans to read mostly from “Visibility: Ten Miles” when she is in Pierre.

Chmielarz lives in the Twin Cities, but grew up in Mobridge. Of the nine books of poetry she has had published, four have poems set in South Dakota or North Dakota. She writes about family, the Dakota/prairie landscape, history and women. Chmielarz’s 10th book will be published in 2016. Her book “The Other Mozart,” a biography in poetry about Nannerl, Wolfgang Mozart’s sister, was made into an opera. She has also written three books for children.

Chmielarz’s work has been a finalist in the National Poetry series and nominated several times for a Pushcart Prize, which features work from small publishing presses. Chmielarz was the recipient of a Jane Kenyon Award from the Water-Stone Review and her work has appeared in many magazines.

Everyone is welcome to attend these events. For more information about the program at the Cultural Heritage Center, please call (605) 773-6006.

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.

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.