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“Blue-Eyed Doll” Author Deanna Klingel to Speak, Sign Books April 14 at Cultural Heritage Center

PIERRE, S.D. – The Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society is hosting a program and book signing with author Deanna K. Klingel at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre on Thursday, April 14, that will also highlight a special piece of the museum’s collection.

The book signing will take place from 2-3:30 p.m. CDT in the lobby, and the program will be held at 7 p.m. in the Education Room. Klingel’s book “Blue-Eyed Doll” will be available for purchase at the Heritage Store before the signing and the program. There is no fee to attend the program or the book signing.

“Blue-Eyed Doll” is a story about a fascinating event that happened in 1927 in the United States. The story continues post WWII, covering the era of 1927-1947, an interesting time in America. It’s the story of a missionary with the dream of world peace, a doll wearing eye glasses and an impressionable little girl. The man and the doll shaped her world view and her life of service.

Several museums across the United States have an Ambassador Doll in their collection, including the Cultural Heritage Center.

Miss Tottori, the State Historical Society’s Ambassador Doll, is a Japanese Friendship Doll whose roots date to the 1920s when Dr. Sidney Gulick, a missionary who had served in Japan over 25 years, formed the Committee on World Friendship among Children in 1926. Their first project was sending American dolls to Japan for “Hina Matsuri,” the Japanese Doll Festival.

Over 12,700 “blue-eyed” dolls from 48 states went overseas as a gift from the children of the United States. Japan returned the friendship gesture by sending 58 “Torei Ningyo” or “Dolls of Gratitude” to the United States in November 1927. Fifty-eight dolls were displayed in various shows before making their way to permanent homes in all 48 states and 10 cities.

“It is exciting for us to host Deanna Klingel for a program and book signing, and we are happy to display Miss Tottori, a piece of the history on which she bases her work,” said Jay Smith, museum director at the Cultural Heritage Center.

Klingel is the author of several books for young and young-at-heart readers. She attends conferences and book festivals, speaks at schools, museums, historical events, and libraries and presents her work and inspires readers and writers of all ages.

Visitors may view the Miss Tottori Doll during regular museum hours from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 1-4:30 p.m. on Sundays. The doll will be on display before and after the April 14 presentation as well.

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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.