

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 7, 2017

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Cultural Heritage Center Museum to debut new family activity Wednesday, July 19

PIERRE, S.D. -- A new museum program focused on families with school-aged children will be available to the public at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre for the first time on Wednesday, July 19.

Visitors wanting to participate in the History Explorers program can enjoy eight South Dakota experiences with new gallery backpacks. Step back in time and learn about a dam construction worker, one-room schoolhouse teacher, Lakota woman, homesteader, newspaper editor, general store clerk, farmer or miner. Four experiences are included in each of the two different backpacks. Each experience includes a brief description, "Where Am I?" information about the gallery location, "What Do I Have" – an object used in the experience and "What Do I Do?" – a hands-on activity.

"We are very excited about the History Explorers program," said Jay Smith, museum director. "Families can check out a backpack and have a wonderful hands-on experience with their kids in the gallery. It is a great tool for moms, dads, aunts, uncles and grandparents to share an indelible experience with kids at the museum. The backpacks add a new element to our South Dakota Experience gallery, and I think our family visitors will enjoy it."

The packs can be checked out at the admission desk for use in the gallery. Each backpack has a gallery map attached to guide visitors to each experience area. Evaluation forms are included so visitors can share their thoughts on the backpacks.

Some of the hands-on activities include identifying mineral samples so the visitor can determine if they have struck gold. Backpack users can recite a lesson from a McGuffey's Reader as part of the teacher experience. A colorful placard can help them identify the items in the Lakota tipi. Users can even practice their math skills buying and selling at the general store.

The History Explorers program is free on a first-come, first-serve basis. There is a small admission fee to the museum for adults ages 18 and older.

Museum hours through Labor Day are 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 1-4:30 p.m. on Sundays.

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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.