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For Immediate Release

Cherokee Heritage Center to participate in Blue Star Museums

Cherokee Heritage Center is one of more than 1,300 museums across America to offer free admission to military personnel and their families this summer

TAHLEQUAH, Okla., (May 25, 2011) --- Cherokee Heritage Center announced the launch of Blue Star Museums, a partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and more than 1,300 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2011. 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.

Cherokee Heritage Center will officially launch the program on May 30 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with a complimentary souvenir pin to each active duty military personnel. The Cherokee Heritage Center is located at 21192 S. Keeler Drive, Park Hill, OK 74451.

“It is a privilege and honor to work with Blue Star Museums and the NEA to provide our military service members and their families with free admission to the Cherokee Heritage Center,” said Carey Tilley, Executive Director at the Cherokee Heritage Center. “Offering them the opportunity to learn about Cherokee history and culture through this program is one small way to show our gratitude to our military personnel for their sacrifices to preserve our freedom and safeguard our country.”

“Blue Star Museums may be the program at the NEA of which I am proudest,” said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. “Blue Star Museums recognizes and thanks our military families for all they are doing for our country, and simultaneously begins young people on a path to becoming life-long museum goers.”

“Last year the success of the inaugural year of the Blue Star Museums program showed that partnerships between the nation’s museum and military communities are a natural,” said Blue Star

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Families Chairman Kathy Roth-Douquet. “We are thrilled that 300,000 military family members visited our partner museums in the summer of 2010. We hope to exceed that number this year as the military community takes advantage of the rich cultural heritage they defend and protect every day. We appreciate the NEA and the nation’s museums who chose to partner with us. We also are grateful to our friends at the MetLife Foundation, the lead supporter of the Blue Star Museums outreach initiative, whose generous donation helps make our work possible.”

This year, more than 1,324 (and counting) museums in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and American Samoa are taking part in the initiative, including more than 500 new museums this year. Museums are welcome to join Blue Star Museums throughout the summer. The effort to recruit museums has involved the partnership efforts of The American Association of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, the Association of Children’s Museums, and the American Association of State and Local History. This year’s Blue Star Museums represent not just fine arts museums, but also science museums, history museums, nature centers, and 70 children’s museums. Participants include The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, The Children’s Museum & Theatre of Maine in Portland, Maine, the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium in Dubuque, Iowa, the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles, California, the Museum of Flight in Seattle, Washington, and the Toy and Action Figure Museum in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma.

About Blue Star Museums

Blue Star Museums runs from Memorial Day, May 30, 2011 through to Labor Day, September 5, 2011. The free admission program is available to active-duty military and their immediate family members (military ID holder and five immediate family members). Active duty military include Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and active duty National Guard and active duty Reserve 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. The site includes a list of participating museums and a map to help with visit planning. Museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact 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 Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience; Great American Voices Military Base Tour; and Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour.

About Cherokee Heritage Center

The Cherokee Heritage Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is the premier cultural center for Cherokee tribal history, culture, and the arts. Located in the heart of the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah, Okla., it was established in 1963 by the Cherokee National Historical Society to preserve and promote the Cherokee culture. The Cherokee Heritage Center is also home to the Cherokee National Archives, which is the Nation’s foremost collection of historic tribal related documents and artifacts from the 1700s through present day. The Cherokee Heritage Center is situated on the grounds of the original Cherokee Female Seminary, which is one of the first institutions of higher learning for women west of the Mississippi and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Park Service has designated the Center as the interpretive site for the western terminus of the Trail Of Tears for the Cherokees and other tribes forcibly removed to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, during the 1800s. For more information, please visit <http://www.CherokeeHeritage.org>.

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About Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families is a national, nonpartisan, nonprofit network of military families from all ranks and services, including guard and reserve, with a mission to support, connect and empower military families. In addition to morale and empowerment programs, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life and works to make military life more sustainable. Membership includes military spouses, children and parents as well as service members, veterans and civilians. To learn more about Blue Star Families, visit 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.

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