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OBERLIN HERITAGE CENTER JOINS BLUE STAR MUSEUM PROGRAM

Oberlin Heritage Center one of more than 600 museums to offer free admission to military personnel and their families this summer



The Oberlin Heritage Center has partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and more than 600 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2010. Guided tours of the Monroe House (1866), the Jewett House (1884) and the Little Red Schoolhouse (1836) are offered every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at

10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., or at other times by appointment. Walk-ins are welcome, although larger parties are requested to make a reservation (by calling (440) 774-1700 or sending an e-mail to tourinfo@oberlinheritage.org).

The launch of the Blue Star Museum program at the Oberlin Heritage Center coincides with activities being planned by the local history museum for Oberlin's big Commencement/Reunion/Memorial Day weekend. Extended tour hours are offered throughout the weekend. "The Oberlin Heritage Center is pleased to take part in this new initiative from the National Endowment for the Arts," said Patricia Murphy, the Heritage Center's Executive Director. "Oberlin's nationally significant history is filled with powerful stories where everyday people have done extraordinary things ever since the college and town were founded in 1833. This recurring theme is likely a message that many military families will appreciate and find uplifting as they experience a challenging time in their own lives."

"America's museums are proud to join the rest of the country in thanking our military personnel and their families for their service and sacrifice," said National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman. "I cannot imagine a better way to do that than welcoming them in to explore and enjoy the tremendous cultural heritage our museums present. The works of art and artifacts on view this summer will inspire and challenge viewers, and sometimes they will just be a great deal of fun."

"There have always been wonderful examples of partnerships between museums and military installations, but the scale of this gift from the museum communities to military families is thrilling," said Blue Star Families Chairman Kathy Roth-Douquet. "Military families work hard for this country, and it is gratifying for us to be recognized for that. We anticipate that thousands of military families will participate in the program and visit museums this summer – many of them for the first time. Blue Star Families will work hard to help our military families make the most of these opportunities."

In addition to being Chairman of Blue Star Families, Ms. Roth-Douquet is married to a Marine Corps officer, who is currently deployed to Afghanistan. They have two children, and Ms. Roth-Douquet and the children plan to take a road trip this summer to visit Blue Star Museums up and down the East Coast.

More than 600 museums in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are taking part in the initiative. The American Association of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, and the Association of Children's Museums each sent a letter from NEA Chairman Landesman inviting museums to participate in this program. In addition to thirty children's museums across the country, participating museums represent a broad range of art, history, science, and cultural topics -- from the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, to the California Surf Museum in Oceanside, California, to the Mission San Luis, a living history site and historic landmark in Tallahassee, Florida, to the International Quilt Study Center & Museum at the University of Lincoln – Nebraska, the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, and the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, New Hampshire.

Blue Star Museums details

The free admission program is available to active duty military and their immediate family members (military ID holder and five immediate family members), which includes active duty Reserve and active duty National Guard. 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.

This is the latest Arts Endowment 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 Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families is a national, non-partisan, non-profit 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 with civilian community and leaders. Membership includes spouses, kids, parents, service members, veterans and civilians.

Operation Appreciation is an initiative of Blue Star Families that seeks to connect military families to the larger community. Blue Star Families 2009 annual survey shows that 94 percent of military families feel that the larger community doesn't truly understand or appreciate the sacrifices we make for the country. Through initiatives such as Blue Star Museums, Blue Star Families provides avenues for the larger community to show that they do understand, in meaningful ways that enrich the lives of military service members, spouses, children and parents. For more information, please visit www.BlueStarFam.org.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The NEA is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit www.arts.gov.

About the Oberlin Heritage Center

The Oberlin Heritage Center is accredited by the American Association of Museums and is widely recognized as a model small museum, historical society and historic preservation organization. It offers educational programs and special events both at its complex of historic sites and throughout the community, often in collaboration with other organizations. The Heritage Center includes over 750 memberships, with the support of individuals, families, businesses and organizations from Oberlin and throughout the country. Its on-site tour is family-friendly and accommodates up to 15 people on a guided 75-minute visit of three beautifully preserved historic buildings that serve as backdrop for engaging stories of people and events from Oberlin's first century (1833-1933).

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