



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS ANNOUNCES
BIG READ GRANT TO WYOMING CENTER FOR THE BOOK
TO CELEBRATE MY ANTONIA**

*Wyoming is one of nearly 200 communities in 2007
to participate in national program to promote literary reading*

*The NEA presents the Big Read in partnership with the
Institute of Museum and Library Services*

Washington, D.C.—June 25, 2007—The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) today announced that the Wyoming Center for the Book is one of 117 organizations that will receive grants to support Big Read programs between September and December 2007. The Big Read, launched nationally in 2006 by the NEA, in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Arts Midwest, encourages literary reading by asking communities to come together to read and discuss a single book. The organizations selected to participate in the Big Read will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 to promote and carry out community-based programs.

The Big Read in Wyoming will take place September 12 to November 15 through 13 of the state's 23 county library systems. Participating counties are Albany, Campbell, Converse, Fremont, Johnson, Laramie, Lincoln, Niobrara, Park, Sheridan, Sweetwater, Uinta and Weston. The Big Read will have its official kickoff at the Wyoming Book Festival in Cheyenne September 15.

Modeled on successful "one book, one community" programs, the Big Read was created to address the national decline in literary reading as documented in the NEA's 2004 landmark survey *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*. The survey showed that less than half the American adult population now reads literature.

To encourage community-wide participation in the project, each Big Read lead organization will collaborate with public and private partners within its community to develop a program of activities related to the selected novel. Big Read events in Wyoming will include a keynote appearance at the Wyoming Book Festival by past state

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poet laureate Robert Roripaugh, showings of the PBS documentary, “Willa Cather: The Road is All,” community celebrations and book clubs in every participating county and living history presentations. .

“By joining the Big Read, these cities and towns are showing that reading is necessary to the cultural, civic, even economic fabric of their communities. They understand the benefit of having people from different generations and walks of life reading and discussing a great book,” said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia. “Yes, this is about reading, but it’s also about getting people to leave their homes and offices, unplug themselves for a few hours, and enjoy the pleasures of literature with their neighbors.”

“We are pleased to announce this second round of Big Read grants. The first-round grantees created innovative and exciting partnership activities that exceeded our expectations,” said IMLS Director Anne-Imelda Radice, Ph.D. “We’re eager to support these additional communities in launching their collaborative efforts. Through the Big Read, IMLS and NEA are assisting people all across the country as they come together in community to rediscover the great American novel.”

The NEA also will provide participating communities with a library of free materials, including reader’s and teacher’s guides for each of the Big Read novels, an audio guide for each novel featuring distinguished actors and writers, an online organizer’s guide for hosting a Big Read program, Big Read publicity materials, and a comprehensive program Web site.

For a complete list of communities participating in the Big Read, a list of the Big Read novels, program application guidelines, or more information on the program, please visit www.neabigread.org.

The National Endowment for the Arts 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 Endowment is the nation’s largest annual 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.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit: www.imls.gov.

Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit www.artsmidwest.org.

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