

Willa Cather novel inspiration to be next Tourism Serves site

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LINCOLN, Neb. (October 19, 2016)— Nebraska Tourism's fourth Nebraska Tourism Serves project will take place in Bladen, Nebraska, November 4 and 5. Nebraska Tourism Serves brings volunteers together to celebrate and restore beloved tourist destinations in our state.

The fourth project will be at The Nebraska State Historical Society's Pavelka Farmstead in Bladen, Nebraska, near Red Cloud (the home of Willa Cather). This property provided part of the setting for Cather's most famous work, *My Ántonia*. Those assisting with the cleanup will do a number of maintenance tasks that would improve the visitor experience, including painting to cover recent vandalism, repairing the cellar steps, landscaping and cleanup of the home's interior.

"The Pavelka Farmstead is one of Nebraska's irreplaceable literary destinations," explained Ashley Olson, executive director of The Willa Cather Foundation. "Once home to the prototype for one of our nation's celebrated literary characters, the farmstead also has the potential to provide an exceptional demonstration of Nebraska's Czech immigrant culture. The Willa Cather Foundation is pleased to work with Tourism Serves to make this site more inviting to guests as we prepare to celebrate the 100th publication anniversary of *My Ántonia* in 2018."

Full schedule for the project on November 4-5:

Friday, November 4

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Meet at the Farmstead, 1137 Highway 4, Bladen, Nebraska 68928

Saturday, November 5

9 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Meet at the Farmstead, 1137 Highway 4, Bladen, Nebraska 68928

The service site is located southeast of Bladen, Nebraska, 1/2 mile south of the intersection of Highway 4 and County Road 1100. Volunteers should park along the road.

Lunch and drinks will be provided.

It's important for volunteers to remember that this is a country property and one without basic utilities, so layers of clothes, gloves, hats, dust mask, boots or whatever would help someone account for November weather are recommended. Work gloves will be especially important as a great deal of work will involve clean-up of dead trees, bushes, and fallen outbuildings. A port-a-john will be on the property.

This is the first year of the Nebraska Tourism Serves program, with the goal to organize four service projects. The first project was held in May, where volunteers helped restore the historic Fort Robidoux near Gering. Another project took place in June, where eager individuals cleared old railroad ties and did various other tasks along the Cowboy Trail near Chadron, preparing the 321 mile trail for completion in the future. Thirdly, in September a group worked to clean up the Shannon Trail that runs through 16 communities in northeast Nebraska. In total, the first three Nebraska Tourism Serves opportunities contributed over 360 man hours to these projects, making a significant impact on the tourism potential in Nebraska.

Interested in volunteering?

Anyone is welcome to volunteer. Volunteers need to complete a registration form by Wednesday, Nov. 2. The form can be downloaded at:

<http://visitnebraska.com/media/industry/2016-11-30-00-00-00-utc-nebraska-tourism-serves>.

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The mission of the Nebraska Tourism Commission is to expand Nebraska's dynamic and diverse travel industry making it more viable by creating awareness, attracting increased visitors which results in greater tourism revenue and economic gain throughout the state. To learn more, go to VisitNebraska.com.

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