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N E W S R E L E A S E

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NHC hires program officer for two-state Chautauqua

The Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) has hired Beth McQueen as program officer in charge of several programming areas, including the 2008 Kansas-Nebraska Chautauqua, entitled "Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties."

McQueen will be project director for the two-state Chautauqua, as well as serving as community coordinator for the Nebraska host cities. She also will coordinate the statewide simulcast of the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues lecture series.

McQueen graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in English literature and writing and a minor in French. She was in exchange programs in Australia and on the island of Reunion near Madagascar. She worked in the development and gift planning office of Nova Southeastern University in Florida while finishing a master's degree in cross-disciplinary studies, with an emphasis in conflict analysis and resolution in culture and society.

The "Bright Dreams, Hard Times" Chautauqua will explore critical changes in cultural and political life in the 1930s through the lives of five historical figures: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Louisiana Gov. Huey Long, Pentecostal leader Aimee Semple McPherson, Harlem Renaissance writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, and humorist Will Rogers.

"History provides insight into the things that are happening today in our world," McQueen said. "Through Chautauqua, we have the opportunity to gain historical perspective and relate it to our present and future. With this historical context, we can learn how to deal with issues, both those that repeat throughout time and those that seem new to us. My position at the NHC gives me the distinct opportunity to be part of this educational process in many capacities."

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded the NHC a \$179,010 grant with an additional federal match of \$105,000 to support a new Chautauqua program that will tour 12 communities in Nebraska and Kansas from 2008 through 2010, one of two special projects funded by the NEH as part of its "We The People" initiative.

Each host community will offer nearly a week's worth of educational programming, including four evening presentations by scholars portraying the historical figures; workshops offered by the Chautauqua scholars on topics related to America in the 1930s; a documentary project for high school students reminiscent of the WPA photographic work of the '30s; a Youth Chautauqua Camp for middle-school students to recover their local history; and an accompanying exhibition on the Dust Bowl. The grant also will support reading and discussion programs and a 1930s film series for each community before the arrival of Chautauqua next June.

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