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N E W S R E L E A S E

For release: Nov. 18, 2008

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Nebraska Humanities Council wins 2008 Schwartz Prize

The Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) has won a 2008 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize for excellence in public programming for “The New Nebraskans,” a statewide program initiative designed to encourage productive civic discussion of issues faced by immigrants, refugees and their host communities as demographic changes continue to shape Nebraska’s future.

The prize was awarded by the Federation of State Humanities Councils during its recent conference in Washington, D.C. In a joint statement announcing the award, the judges cited the NHC’s “ability to identify an important change taking place in their state and, instead of running away from it, meet the change and provide understanding through the public humanities.”

Judges noted the initiative’s three-phase programming structure, which also includes “The Good Life: Rural-Urban-Suburban” and “Growing Older in Nebraska.” They said it “could provide a model for other council programming, as it allowed the council to look not only at immigration but also the shift in population from rural to urban areas and the increasingly older population.”

Launched in 2004, “The New Nebraskans” focused on four goals: To encourage public understanding of the challenges of transition into modern American culture, including language barriers; to compare and contrast new immigrant issues with those of previous generations of immigrants in Nebraska and the United States; to enhance understanding and appreciation of new immigrant and refugee cultures and histories among Nebraskans; and to enhance immigrant and refugee understanding of and connection with U.S. and Nebraska history and culture.

Non-profit organizations were encouraged to use creative methods to bring groups together, to facilitate understanding among multiple groups, to form partnerships among newer ethnic organizations and established institutions within communities, and to plan for sustainability of the project beyond the grant period.

As a result, many projects and programs were brought forward by groups that had not previously worked with NHC, as well as organizations who had a long history with the council.

To date, the NHC has invested more than \$537,000 in “The New Nebraskans” phase of the demographic initiative through its grants, humanities resource center, and special programs. This amount has been complemented with a more than 50 percent match of \$272,000 from participating organizations.

For more information on this ongoing, three-phase initiative, call Mary Yager, NHC senior program officer, at 474-2131 ext. 103 or e-mail her at mary@nebraskahumanities.org.

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