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Willa Cather State Historic Site

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IMLS-funded exhibit to open in the new National Willa Cather Center

RED CLOUD, NEB. (September 16, 2015) – Thanks to a Learning Experiences grant of \$111,479 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a new educational exhibit will be designed and installed within the National Willa Cather Center. The facility, expected to open in the fall of 2016, will serve as a vibrant arts and educational center for approximately 8,000 national and international visitors annually.

The exhibit, to be entitled *American Bittersweet: The Life and Writing of Willa Cather*, will honor and explore the life and legacy of Willa Cather through interpretive experiences that will educate guests while showcasing many priceless historical photographs and artifacts. The exhibit's name, taken from the American bittersweet vine that grows outside Cather's childhood home in Red Cloud, Nebraska, explores and embraces the complexities of Cather's life and art—domesticity and worldliness; home and travel; happiness and sadness; the bitter and the sweet.

“A self-guided and interactive educational experience about Cather's life and work has long been missing from our facility,” said WCF Executive Director Ashley Olson. “Creating this exhibit as part of the new National Willa Cather Center will improve and enrich the experience of every visitor. The new exhibit will enable guests to learn about Cather's life and times, understand the significance of the place they are visiting, and inspire those who haven't read her work to do so.”

Willa Cather (1873-1947), who grew up in Red Cloud and graduated from the University of Nebraska, is one of the most important American novelists of the first half of the twentieth century. Seen as a regional writer for decades after her passing in 1947, critics increasingly identify Cather as a canonical American writer, the peer of authors like Hemingway, Faulkner and Wharton.

Impact of the National Willa Cather Center's creation will be felt locally, as Red Cloud embraces and builds upon its cultural asset, and globally, as readers in schools and homes across the world encounter a writer who somehow, from across vast span of time and space, speaks to them in a way at once universal and profoundly personal. This exhibit strives to honor the work and memory of one of America's great writers. Through it, the generosity, honesty and beauty of Cather's work will continue to inspire new generations of readers.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. Their mission is to inspire libraries and

museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Their grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow them on Facebook and Twitter.

“Millions of Americans visit museums each year,” said IMLS Director Susan H. Hildreth. “These federal investments will ultimately help museums deliver enhanced learning experiences, improve collections care, and address community needs.”

Founded in 1955 and headquartered in Red Cloud, the Willa Cather Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting Willa Cather’s legacy through education, historic preservation, and the arts. Learn more at www.WillaCather.org.

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