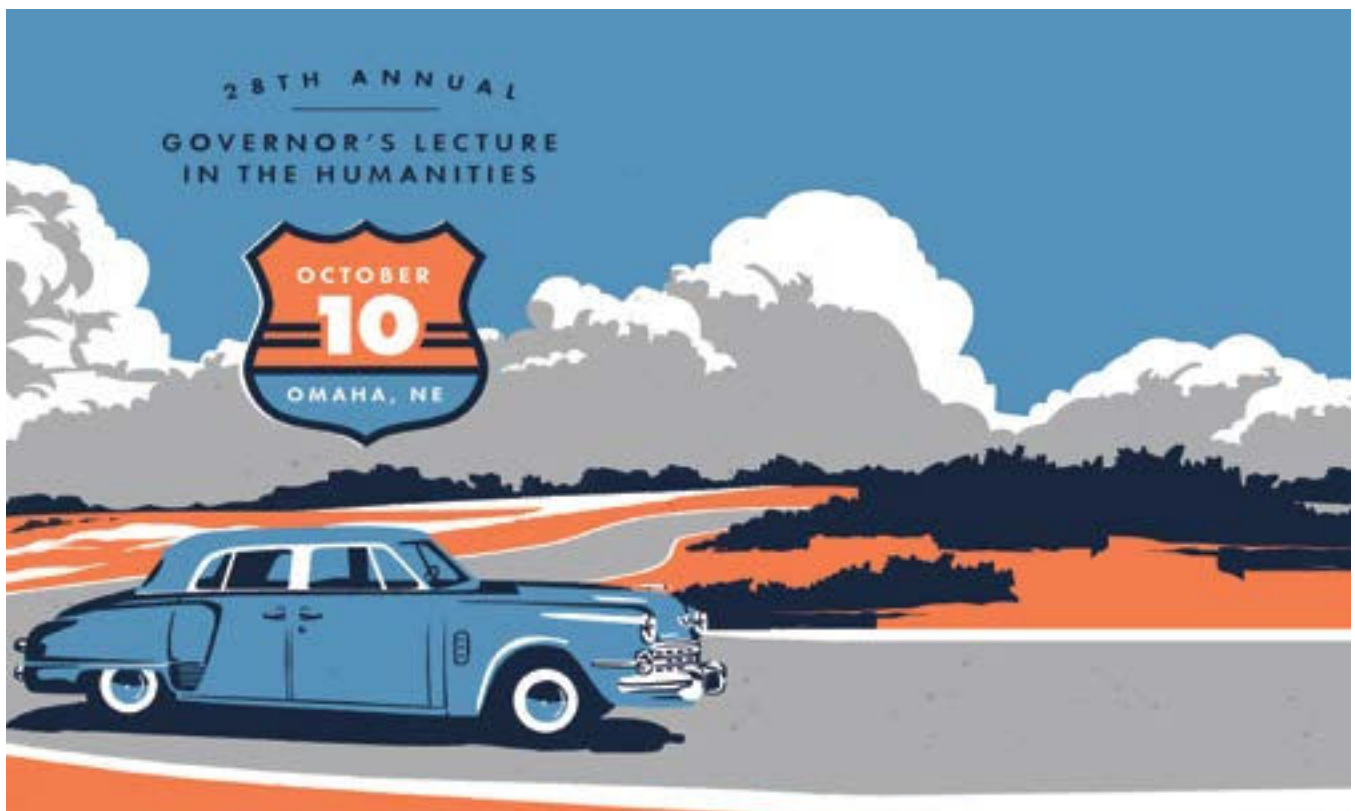


RAPPORT

HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

HELPING PEOPLE EXPLORE WHAT CONNECTS US AND MAKES US HUMAN



28TH ANNUAL
GOVERNOR'S LECTURE
IN THE HUMANITIES

OCTOBER
10
OMAHA, NE

"FROM MOSCOW TO THE
LINCOLN HIGHWAY:
AN EVENING WITH AMOR
TOWLES"

PG 2



CHAUTAUQUA
"WHAT
CONNECTS
US" PHOTOS

PG 5

SPARK
YOUR
CURIOSITY



HUMANITIES
WEEK
STATEWIDE
OCT 7-15

PG 12

UPCOMING EVENTS

- AUG 12** NEBRASKA WARRIOR WRITERS BEGINS
(Details on our website)
- AUG 29 - OCT 7** "VOICES AND VOTES"
Saunders County Museum
Wahoo
- DUE SEP 1** MINI GRANTS
September 1 & November 1
(Details on our website)
- SEP 15** HN FALL BOARD MEETING
Chadron
- OCT 7-15** HUMANITIES WEEK
(See page 12)
- OCT 10** GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES
(See pages 2-3)
- OCT 16- NOV 20** "VOICES AND VOTES"
Legacy of the Plains Museum
Gering
- OCT 20** BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE
(Details on our website)

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HOW DISCUSSING BOOKS IMPACTS THE CRAFT OF WRITING

By Amy Jones, Editor in Chief, *Writer's Digest*

Amor Towles talks about how he became a writer and the book club he started with friends.

Excerpted from the November/December 2019 issue of *Writer's Digest* magazine and reprinted with the permission of *Writer's Digest*.



Amor Towles didn't one day decide to quit his job in the financial sector to try his hand at novel writing. He began writing when he was a child and followed that passion to Yale. He studied under novelist Peter Matthiessen, who encouraged him. Towles realized, "My dream of being a writer is not just me being crazy."

Towles then received a writing fellowship at Stanford where he worked closely with novelist, poet, and literary critic Gilbert Sorrentino. But his career path took a hard left turn as he went to work at an investment firm, which Matthiessen called "a personal disappointment."

Towles returned to fiction after 10 years, writing three best-sellers: "Rules of Civility" (2011), "A Gentleman in Moscow" (2016), and "The Lincoln Highway" (2021).

WD: What has your writing journey really been like?

TOWLES: It was very smooth in some respects. In terms of the not-smooth



parts, it was not writing for 10 years. It was writing [my first]

book—that I didn't like—for seven years. In the course of all that, I never submitted anything for publication. I was getting stronger as a writer, so by the time I had a cleaned-up version of [my second book], "Rules of Civility," it was a very strong document.

I wanted to ask you about your book club.

I was about to turn 40 and I was frustrated with some of the contemporary fiction I had been reading. I read a book by Harold Bloom talking about the books that really shaped his life and that gave him wisdom specifically. And I was not feeling that the books that I'd been reading were going to do that in any material way.

So I was talking to a friend at a cocktail party and saying that I was going back to being a student and targeting reading books that I knew that would be fulfilling and interesting if I read them at the age of 20, 40, 60, and 80.

She said, "I want to do this. I'm totally sympathetic to what you're trying to do."

So it was the two of us and we decided it would be small. It would be four people: two men, two women. I was the only person who knew all three of them, but we were all seasoned readers. Several people, three out of four, had a degree in literature of one form or another.

We spent a year plus reading Proust, but that was now 15 years

ago. So we've been together reading for 15 years. We meet on a monthly basis to talk about usually a single book, and we do "projects." We mostly read dead people. We've done extended reading on the American Renaissance period: Whitman, Emerson, Dickinson, Thoreau...It went from reading five Twain novels and six Faulkner novels, and over the course of a year really doing an examination of the American voice, as it were.

One of my favorite projects was reading back-to-back Flaubert's "Madame Bovary," Tolstoy's "Anna Karenina," James' "Portrait of a Lady," and George Eliot's "Middlemarch." We called it "19th Century Wives Under Pressure"—all written within about a 50-year time frame of each other, very much in sympathy in terms of looking at how was the role of women changing in society, how was the role of church changing in society, how was the role of commerce, the rise of the middle class, the end of aristocracy.

We found a lot of new things, and some of what we read is stuff that we've revisited. We read maybe eight Russian novels in a row and then short stories. That was a great year.

We read a bunch of Nobel prize winners [that we'd never read before]. We read Mahfouz, the first person to win the Nobel prize in Arabic, and it was an amazing thing.

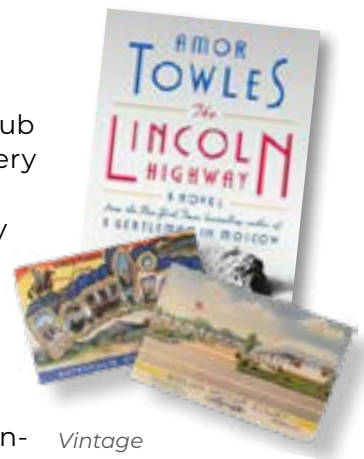
So has it been fulfilling? Absolutely. Personally for us, for our relationships, it's fun. It's very enriching for my writing.

I should say that, I think like a lot of serious fiction writers, I began writing and reading at the exact same time. In first grade just as I was beginning to read, I decided I wanted to be a writer and I've written and read back and forth throughout my life, you know, read something, write something, read something,

write something. So using what I read is a constant way of improving my own craft.

That is absolutely what my life's been like. I studied literature at Yale, I studied literature at Stanford when I got my master's there, because I didn't get an MFA, I got a Master's in English. And the study of literature has very much been part of me refining my own sense of craft, what it means to make [a novel], write a novel, build a novel or whatever it is.

So, yeah, absolutely, the book club has been very productive and healthy in terms of my own writing. Using what I read is a constant way of improving my own craft.



Vintage postcards helped Towles map a trail for "The Lincoln Highway."

SEE AMOR TOWLES AT THE 28TH ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES OCTOBER 10.

HN, with co-sponsors UMB Bank and Union Pacific, welcome you to **"From Moscow to the Lincoln Highway: An Evening with Amor Towles"** at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 10, at the Holland Performing Arts Center in Omaha. This free public lecture will also be live-streamed online.

Please check the HN website for the most current information on the lecture and preceding benefit reception and dinner:
HumanitiesNebraska.org/Governors-Lecture

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Heather Thomas at **Heather@HumanitiesNebraska.org**.

BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE

OCT
20

Humanities Nebraska (HN) is seeking nominations for its Council board by Friday, October 20. Board members are selected statewide from those who show a passion for the humanities and the cultural life of Nebraska. HN makes every effort to find community members who reflect the geographic, occupational, and ethnic diversity of Nebraska, and also seek balance between involvement in the humanities and other pursuits.

Nominations for the Council board must be postmarked or submitted online on or before October 20. You can find nomination forms and a complete list of basic responsibilities on our website or by making your request via email to info@humanitiesnebraska.org. For more details, visit our website at **HumanitiesNebraska.org** and select "Board" under the "About Us" menu.

2023 SOWER AWARD RECIPIENT: BETH DOTAN

Humanities Nebraska has selected historian Beth S. Dotan, PhD., to receive the 2023 Sower Award in the Humanities in recognition of her efforts to increase understanding about the Holocaust.



A research assistant professor in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Harris Center for Judaic Studies,

Dotan created Nebraska Stories of Humanity as part of her Ph.D. work at UNL. Funded by HN, this digital web portal highlights stories of Holocaust survivors and servicemen who liberated Nazi camps and settled in Nebraska after World War II.

"Her programs and projects have advanced scholarship in the humanities and her advocacy of this work to the greater community has been uniquely effective," said

nominator Robert Nefsky. Nefsky is former chairman of the Nebraska Humanities Council board (1995-96) and received the Sower Award in 1998.

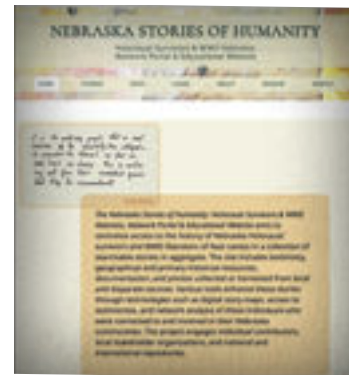
Dotan is a native Nebraskan who has lived and worked both here and in Israel. From 2000-2013, she served as the founding Executive Director of the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha. She has also served as the Director, International Department of the Ghetto Fighters House Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage Museum in Lohamei HaGeta'ot, Israel, from 2012-2015. From 2015-2018, she served as compliance officer and project administrator of Tsofen, an Arab-Jewish organization promoting the integration of Israel's Arab citizens into its high tech industries.

Prior to receiving her Ph.D. from UNL, Dotan graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a BA in History and Hebrew. She earned a MA in Jewish

Education from Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in Los Angeles.

Dotan will be honored on Oct. 10, 2023, during the 28th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities at the Holland Performing Arts Center in Omaha. Titled, "From Moscow to the Lincoln Highway: An Evening with Amor Towles," the free public event will begin at 7:30 p.m. following a benefit dinner to help raise funds to support HN's statewide programming. A live-stream viewing option will also be available.

Please visit the HN website, humanitiesnebraska.org, to stay up to date on details on the Governor's Lecture and Sower Award presentation.



Nebraska Stories of Humanity

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY: NEBRASKA WINNERS!

On Thursday, June 15, at the 2023 National Contest awards ceremony, four Nebraska students received top honors. The event was held in person at the University of Maryland.

More than 2,600 students and 600 teachers attended the National Contest in College Park, MD, from June 10-15. During the preceding 2022-2023 school year, more than half a million students completed projects centered around the theme, "Frontiers in History: People, Ideas, and Events," in one of five categories: exhibit, documentary, paper, performance, or website. Top students from all 50 states, Washington D.C., U.S. territories, and international schools were invited to compete in the National Contest.

Nebraska winners included **Brooklyn Guenther** for her Junior Individual Performance "The Pony Express: Delivering a New Frontier to the American Frontier," Brooklyn attends St. Rose of Lima School, Crofton. Her teacher is Ginger Schieffer.

In the Senior Group Exhibit category, **Kya Branch, Mirabelle Hesse, and Emma von Scheliha** won with their exhibit, "Hip-Hop: How the Movement Defined Black America." The group attends Lincoln Southeast High School. Their teachers are Noa Craft and Kyle Beacom.

Humanities Nebraska partners with Nebraska Wesleyan University to make National History Day available to students statewide. HN is grateful to the Dillon Foundation for funding this program.

HUNDREDS ATTEND "WHAT CONNECTS US" CHAUTAUQUA IN GRAND ISLAND

Hundreds of Nebraskans went to this year's Chautauqua under the tent at Stuhr Museum's Railroad Town in Grand Island July 21-22. The event focused on "What Connects Us," bringing together four popular previous Chautauqua scholars: Warren Brown, Taylor Keen, Becky Stone, and Karen Vuranch.

On Friday evening, Chautauqua attendees heard entertainment from David Seay who presented "Traditional Folk Songs." The audience even learned songs on free harmonicas. Then, Warren Brown as Mark Twain and Karen Vuranch as Edith Wharton dazzled the crowd: he with humorous anecdotes and she with a moving first-person account of the effects of World War I.

Saturday, the scholars led interactive workshops at Grand Island Public Library, where audience members engaged with topics such as African American storytelling and WWI literature.

Back in the tent that evening, musical entertainment was "All Nebraska, All Original" by Dan Holtz. Chautauquans Becky Stone as Rosa Parks and Taylor Keen as Chief Standing Bear took the stage to move the audience with insightful first-person accounts of the historical figures.

"What Connects Us" Chautauqua promoted understanding and curiosity. This event was made possible by many sponsors and partners, including the Johnny Carson Fund at the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Stuhr Museum, Grand Island Public Library, Greater Grand Island Community Foundation, Kim & Tom Dinsdale, Hall County Historical Society, Grand Island Tourism, Kay Fowles, Stuhr Museum Foundation, and Grand Island Area Economic Development Corp.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Join these generous contributors and help people explore what connects us and makes us human.

Gifts received between April 1, 2023 & July 31, 2023.

Many donors make multiple gifts throughout the year. Cumulative giving for the year is listed in our annual report.

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THANK YOU, PATRON'S CIRCLE for supporting HN's mission.



We thank these generous individuals who are helping ensure a vibrant cultural life in Nebraska with annual gifts of \$1,000 or more made between May 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

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**Deceased*

Contact Heather Thomas at heather@HumanitiesNebraska.org to learn more.



SUMMER READING KITS HELP KIDS MAINTAIN SKILLS

With the help of many donors, Humanities Nebraska filled and distributed 300 summer reading kits to families across the state.

Designed to help preschool and elementary school kids maintain literacy skills for a better start to the fall semester, the kits contain books in English and Spanish, toys, and activities in a durable tote. A discussion guide written by HN Director of Literary Programs Dr. Erika Hamilton, with input from Prime Time storytellers and discussion leaders, encourages families to spend time together reading and discussing books.

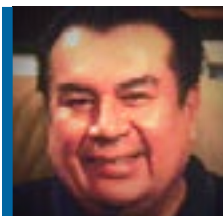
This is the third summer HN has been able to provide these kits. Valued at \$125 each, the kits were made possible thanks to Give to Lincoln donors, the

Sherwood Foundation, Roger and Carol Lewis, Connie Ryan, and an anonymous donor.

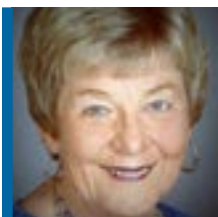
Due to popular demand, HN had to limit the number of kits delivered to each location. Staff hopes to increase the number of kits available to 400 in 2024. If you would like to become a contributor, please contact Heather Thomas, director of development, at 402-474-2131 or heather@humanitiesnebraska.org.



IN MEMORY



FRANK BLYTHE | 1941-2023 Francis Frank Marion Blythe, Jr., died July 21. One of the nation's foremost storytellers, he was born in Pipestone, Minnesota, to his Eastern Cherokee father and Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota mother. He grew up in Arizona, where he started his career in public television. He was the first executive director of what is now known as Vision Maker Media, leading the organization to create the largest archive of Native films in the country. He served on the HN board 1988-1994.



PATRICIA THOMPSON | 1940-2023 Patricia Ann Thompson died May 22. Pat grew up on a farm near Kramer, NE. She married in 1960 and worked as a bookkeeper, secretary, and tax preparer while her husband taught school and they raised three children. Pat eventually opened her own real estate and insurance agency. She married again in 1982, and she and her husband Tom Thompson were very active in the community. She was a Girl Scout leader, TeamMates mentor, and HN board member (1998-2004).



JOHN R. WUNDER | 1945-2023 John Wunder leaves behind a remarkable legacy of scholarly work and devoted mentorship. Besides teaching history at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he served as director of the Center for Great Plains Studies until 1997. His leadership was characterized by a collaborative approach and boundless enthusiasm. He was also president of the Mari Sandoz Heritage Society and the Western History Association and received the Sower Award in the Humanities in 2021.

GRANT SPOTLIGHT: RETURN OF THE THUNDERBIRDS

In April, the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center partnered with the Indian Center, Inc., in Lincoln to host a cultural event that celebrated seasonal occurrences important to both bird enthusiasts and Native Americans: spring bird migration and spring ceremonies marking the return of the rain and rebirth of the earth.

"Return of the Thunderbirds" provided opportunities for the exchange of cultural practices as well as ecological knowledge from scientific study and from generations of experience living on and observing the land. Attendees listened to and danced with the Many Moccasins Dance Troupe, witnessed a live bird presentation from Raptor Conservation Alliance, heard stories and indigenous knowledge directly from Native American speakers, and learned

about games and musical instruments originating in the Americas.

"Return of the Thunderbirds" is a great example of the type of innovative, collaborative program Humanities Nebraska is seeking in its new "connections" grantmaking emphasis. Grant applications that demonstrate unique connections—such as developing a program outside of a typical lecture/exhibit format, or demonstrating collaboration between a "traditional" humanities grantmaking partner (like a cultural organization) and a non-traditional partner such as a science-based organization—will be prioritized for funding. For more information, visit the grants section of the HN website.



RECENTLY AWARDED GRANTS

Asian Community and Cultural Center, Lincoln, \$1,558 for Camp Culture 2023 • **Black Votes Matter Institute of Community Engagement**, Omaha, \$2,000 for the showing of "Divisible" • **Elkhorn Valley Museum**, Norfolk, \$1,997 supporting "The Unchosen Ones" community & artist engagement • **Flatwater Shakespeare Company**, Lincoln, \$1,250 for Little But Fierce 2023 • **Friends of the Homestead**, Beatrice, \$750 in support of "Homestead Days: Presentation Series" • **Joslyn Castle Trust**, Omaha, \$1,633 to support their "Architecture on Tap" series • **Kearney Area Community Foundation**, \$1,600 for Family Fun Fest 2023 • **Larksong Writers Place**, Lincoln, \$1,263 for "Third Thursday: Voices at Larksong Reading Series" and \$895 to support "Larksong Writers Place First Friday Online Reading Series" • **Malone Community Center**, Lincoln, \$1,000 for their Juneteenth Celebration • **Mari Sandoz Heritage Society**, Lincoln, \$2,000 for "Mari Sandoz's Homeland Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: A High Plains Symposium" • **Nebraska StoryArts**, Omaha, \$2,000 supporting Moonshell Storytelling Festival • **Partners for Livable Omaha**, \$1,000 supporting "The Naturalist School (Sacred Hoop Collective: Poetics of Pahaku)" • **Village of Bushnell**, \$2,000 for "Bushnell Day 2023: Penning the Past, Framing the Future"

14
GRANTS
\$20,946
TOTAL

SEE VOICES AND VOTES WHILE YOU CAN!



"Voices and Votes" has sparked many good conversations between visitors.

"Voices and Votes: Democracy in America" continues to tour Nebraska. This traveling exhibition prompts visitors to explore their role in the ever-evolving story of democracy in the United States. Many Nebraskans have toured the exhibition in one of its first three locations - Howells, Kearney and Belvidere - including Senator Deb Fischer and members of her staff.

Nebraskans have enjoyed the exhibit since it began touring the state. One guest at the

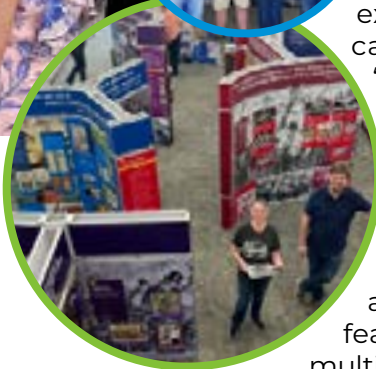
Howells Historical Society noted that "Voices and Votes" is a "timely and important exhibit."

Based on a Smithsonian National Museum of American History exhibition called

"American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith", "Voices and Votes"

features multimedia displays and

interactive games to cultivate conversation and renewed perspectives on democracy, citizenship, and voting. Visitors to the exhibit in Belvidere have enjoyed one interactive display by dropping a coin in the slot that best answers the question "Why Do You Vote?"



"When our founders first came to Kearney back in the 1870s, they were deeply intertwined with many of the democratic principles that Voices and Votes examines in its displays," said Broc Anderson, community engagement director of Trails & Rails Museum, which hosted the exhibit during in June and July. The timing of that leg of the tour coincided with Kearney's 150th anniversary.

After August 20th, the exhibit will move on from Belvidere to:

Wahoo: Aug. 29—Oct. 7
Saunders County Historical Museum

Gering: Oct. 16—Nov. 20
Legacy of the Plains Museum

Omaha: Dec. 1—Jan. 27, 2024
Great Plains Black History Museum

"Voices and Votes" is brought to this state with support from Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Trucking Association, and other generous donors.

For more information, see: HumanitiesNebraska.org/voices

NEW
INTERN

MEET MACIE!

In May, Humanities Nebraska welcomed Macie Thomas as the new communications intern. Macie is a senior at Nebraska Wesleyan University, majoring in English and Communication Studies and minoring in Political Science. During her free time, Macie enjoys reading, running, and spending time with family. She admires Humanities Nebraska's intentional preservation of stories and drive to connect Nebraskans. One of Macie's



favorite pastimes is learning about others, so her experience at Chautauqua 2023 has been the highlight of her time so far. "I found Chautauqua's presentation style to be really unique," she said. "Opportunities like group-reading WWI literature and hearing personal accounts from the scholars kept me engaged and eager to learn more!"

MAKE AN IMPACT



GIVE NEBRASKA is a coalition of 75 diverse nonprofits working to build a vibrant, creative, and healthy community. Humanities Nebraska greatly appreciates donors who designated gifts to us through their Give Nebraska workplace giving campaigns.

To learn more, please visit givenebraska.org.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE HUMANITIES



Be the Spark with a gift of \$50!

It all started 50 years ago with a spark of curiosity and a desire to serve.

The "Nebraska Committee for the Humanities" was established in 1973 in partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities, paving the way for Humanities Nebraska and a mission to help people explore what connects us and makes us human.

Within a few years, the committee became "Nebraska Humanities Council" (NHC) and served the state with grants, an active speakers bureau, and programming like Prime Time Family Reading, Chautauqua, and Capitol Forum on America's Future to engage Nebraskans of all ages. Ten years ago, NHC rebranded to "Humanities

HN 50th Anniversary shirts are free for first-time donors of \$50+ and are sold for \$20 on our website (includes \$10 donation) while supplies last.

Nebraska."

As HN celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, we invite you to be the spark with a gift of \$50 in celebration of 50 years. First time donors of \$50 and above will receive a free "Spark Your Curiosity" shirt. Follow the link below for details.

You may also be interested in setting up a recurring online gift at \$50 per month or \$50 twice a year or four times a year. Thank you for sparking our statewide work, we look forward to the next 50 years!

To become an HN donor and more ways to give, please visit:
HumanitiesNebraska.org/ways-to-give/donate



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Ensure an Endless Tradition of Arts & Humanities in Nebraska

Preserve the values and assets that are important to you and your family while helping to preserve arts and humanities for the future.

Download our FREE legacy planning guide, *Donor Strategies to Preserve Arts & Humanities in Nebraska*, at NebraskaCulture.org/legacy.

Nebraska Cultural Endowment makes your donations with public support enhance the programs and arts of the Nebraska Arts Council and Humanities Nebraska.



TO UPDATE ADDRESS OR CANCEL SUBSCRIPTIONS,
402.474.2131 or INFO@HUMANITIESNEBRASKA.ORG

JOIN US FOR WHAT CONNECTS US DURING HUMANITIES WEEK OCT 7-15, 2023

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON EVENTS WILL CELEBRATE HN'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY.

In celebration of Humanities Nebraska's 50th year of helping people explore what connects us and makes us human, there are events planned statewide for Humanities Week, October 7-15.

"We're excited to showcase core programs and grant-funded events, which happen all around the state every year," said Executive Director Chris Sommerich.

Currently, the list of opportunities includes:

October 7 in Kearney:

"The Pawnee at Fort Kearny – Share the History, Share the Harvest" at Fort Kearney State Historical Park

October 7 in Lincoln, Omaha & via Zoom:

Nebraska Warrior Writers Workshops for veterans, active duty military and their support persons. To sign up, see the HN website.

October 8 in Grand Island:

"Monster Within – Monster Stories and What They Mean" at Grand Island Public Library

October 10 in Omaha and Online Statewide:

2023 Governor's Lecture in the Humanities featuring Amor Towles at Holland Performing Arts Center



*Clockwise from above:
Willa Cather, Members of
the Pawnee Tribe, Nebraska
Warrior Writers workshop.*

October 12 Online Statewide from Red Cloud:

The National Willa Cather Center Virtual Author Series with Tracy Daugherty

October 13 Statewide Online:

Curiosity Connections: Hispanic Heritage Month, featuring Jose Garcia and Linda Perez-Garcia from the HN Speakers Bureau.

October 14 in Brownville:

"Willa Cather's Life in Letters" at Brownville Village Hall

October 14 in Columbus:

"Nebraska Research: Honestly, It's Not for Everyone" at Columbus Public Library

More events are being planned and will be added to HN's online calendar.

For additional information, please visit www.HumanitiesNebraska.org/50-years

To become a sponsor, please email heather@humanitiesnebraska.org.