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**CONTACT**

Kerri VanderHoff  
Grand Rapids Art Museum  
616.831.2914  
[kvanderhoff@artmuseumgr.org](mailto:kvanderhoff@artmuseumgr.org)

**GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM TO PARTICIPATE IN BLUE STAR MUSEUMS**

*GRAM is one of more than 600 museums to offer free admission to military personnel and their families this summer*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., May 24, 2010—Today the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) announced the launch of Blue Star Museums, a partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and more than 600 museums across America to offer free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2010. Families can visit GRAM's website for museum hours. The complete list of participating Blue Star Museums is available at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

"The Grand Rapids Art Museum is pleased to join in this nationwide effort to thank our men and women serving in the military, along with their families, and invite them to visit free of admission charge," said Randy Van Antwerp, GRAM Interim Director. "GRAM offers a diverse array of programming, from Friday Night events with music and social activities to Saturday All Day with the Arts for families of all ages with studio projects and kid-friendly tours. Currently on view through August 15 is the international touring exhibition *Dutch Utopia: American Artists in Holland, 1880-1914*."

"America's museums are proud to join the rest of the country in thanking our military personnel and their families for their service and sacrifice," said National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman. "I cannot imagine a better way to do that than welcoming them in to explore and enjoy the extraordinary cultural heritage our museums present. The works of art on view this summer will inspire and challenge viewers, and sometimes they will just be a great deal of fun."

"There have always been wonderful examples of partnerships between museums and military installations, but the scale of this gift from the museum communities to military families is thrilling," said Blue Star Families Chairman Kathy Roth-Douquet. "Military families work hard for this country, and it is gratifying for us to be recognized for that. We anticipate that thousands of military families will participate in the program and visit museums this summer – many of them for the first time. Blue Star Families will work hard to help our military families make the most of these opportunities."

In addition to being Chairman of Blue Star Families, Ms. Roth-Douquet is married to a Marine Corps officer, who is currently deployed to Afghanistan. They have two children, and Ms. Roth-Douquet and the children plan to take a road trip this summer to visit Blue Star Museums up and down the East Coast.

More than 600 museums in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are taking part in the initiative. The American Association of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors, and the Association of Children's Museums each sent a letter from NEA Chairman Landesman inviting museums to participate in this program. In addition to thirty children's museums across the country, participating museums represent a broad range of art, history, science, and cultural topics -- from the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, to the California Surf Museum in

Oceanside, California, to the Mission San Luis, a living history site and historic landmark in Tallahassee, Florida, to the International Quilt Study Center & Museum at the University of Lincoln – Nebraska, the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, and the Seacoast Science Center in Rye, New Hampshire.

### **Blue Star Museums details**

Blue Star Museums runs from Memorial Day, May 31 through to Labor Day, September 6, 2010. The free admission program is available to active duty military and their immediate family members (military ID holder and five immediate family members), which includes active duty Reserve and active duty National Guard. Some special or limited-time museum exhibits may not be included in this free admission program. For questions on particular exhibits or museums, please contact the museum directly. To find out which museums are participating, visit [www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums). The site includes a list of participating museums and a map to help with visit planning.

Museums that wish to participate in Blue Star Museums may contact [bluestarmuseums@arts.gov](mailto:bluestarmuseums@arts.gov), or Nicole Murray at 202-682-5578.

This is the latest Arts Endowment program to bring quality arts programs to the military, veterans, and their families. Other NEA programs for the military have included Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience, Great American Voices Military Base Tour, and Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour.

### **About Blue Star Families**

Blue Star Families is a national, non-partisan, non-profit network of military families from all ranks and services including guard and reserve, with a mission to support, connect and empower military families. In addition to morale and empowerment programs, Blue Star Families raises awareness of the challenges and strengths of military family life with civilian community and leaders. Membership includes spouses, kids, parents, service members, veterans and civilians.

Operation Appreciation is an initiative of Blue Star Families that seeks to connect military families to the larger community. Blue Star Families 2009 annual survey shows that 94 percent of military families feel that the larger community doesn't truly understand or appreciate the sacrifices we make for the country. Through initiatives such as Blue Star Museums, Blue Star Families provides avenues for the larger community to show that they do understand, in meaningful ways that enrich the lives of military service members, spouses, children and parents. For more information, please visit [www.BlueStarFam.org](http://www.BlueStarFam.org).

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

The NEA is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

### **About the Grand Rapids Art Museum**

The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) celebrates 100 years of art, legacy and vision with its Centennial Year in 2010. The mission of the Grand Rapids Art Museum is to provide a gathering place where people of all ages and backgrounds can enrich their lives through interaction with works of art in a thought-provoking and creative way. Established in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the new art museum is internationally known for its distinguished design and LEED Gold certified status. Established in 1910 as the Grand Rapids Art Association, GRAM has grown to

include more than 5,000 works of art, including American and European 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century painting and sculpture and over 3,500 works on paper. Embracing the city's legacy as a leading center of design and manufacturing, GRAM has a growing collection in the area of design and modern craft.

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