

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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March 11, 2014

“Chautauqua Coming to Norfolk”

The Nebraska Chautauqua is coming to Norfolk June 16 -22 with many activities leading up to the event. The theme for this year’s Chautauqua is “Free Land? 1862 and the Shaping of Modern America.”

The evening activities during the week of Chautauqua in June will be held under a tent just north of the Norfolk Public Library with daytime events held at the Northeast Community College.



Jessica Chamberlain, Director of the Library and local coordinator for the Chautauqua, and Ali Jo Abler with the Elkhorn Valley Museum presented information to the public at a press conference Monday at the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce building.

The Nebraska Chautauqua is held each year at two different locations in Nebraska. Chamberlain said a group in Norfolk applied to have the Chautauqua in Norfolk and were accepted last fall.

In anticipation of the Chautauqua week in June there will be book discussions and movie screenings with discussions beginning this spring.

On March 15 there will be a free movie showing and discussion of “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee” held from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at Norfolk 7 Theatre.

A discussion of the book by Laura Ingalls Wilder, “By the Shores of Silver Lake”, will be held at the Elkhorn Valley Museum 2:00 pm April 13. Discussion will be led by Tina Miller, Park Ranger and Education Coordinator at the Homestead National Monument of America. Copies of the book will be available at the Norfolk Public Library beginning March 3.

On April 29 at 7:00 pm there will be a discussion of the book “O Pioneers!” by Willa Cather led by Vicki Blattert, a retired English teacher. Copies of the book will be available at the Norfolk Public Library beginning March 11.

A free movie showing and discussion of “Heartland” will be held May 10 from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Norfolk 7 Theatre. Discussion will be led by Karen Drevo, Humanities Scholar and librarian at the Norfolk Public Library.

The book “I am a Man” by author Joe Starita will be held June 3 at 6:30 pm at the Norfolk Public Library. Starita will be on hand to sign books and lead the discussion. Copies of the book will be available at the Norfolk Public Library beginning April 22.

Applications for a Youth Chautauqua Camp held in June will be accepted mid-April until the end of May for those who will have completed 4th through 8th grades. Twenty participants will attend the camp from June 16-22 at Northeast Community College researching local historical figures and portraying them at the end of the week.

Adult daytime workshops will be held during Chautauqua week also at the college. An online workshop targeted to high school age students will also be available.

The Carol Hamoy Exhibit "Welcome to America" will be on display at the Norfolk Arts Center throughout the week of Chautauqua. A traveling exhibit about from the Homestead National Monument of America will on exhibit at the Elkhorn Valley Museum during Chautauqua week. Speakers during the evening that week include those acting out the parts of author Willa Cather, author Laura Ingalls Wilder, inventor George Washington Carver, General All programs associated with the Chautauqua are free and open to the public.

According to Chamberlain, the five themes of the Chautauqua week will be: "the unfolding of the 'free soil, free labor' ideal for America held by Republican policy-makers of the time; the rapid economic development of the West and the nation, especially through the building of railroads; the accelerated displacement of Native Americans; broader access to public education that resulted in more opportunities for people of the West; and an increasingly landed and educated populace who had more potential for social mobility in a developing American West."

The "Free Land" Chautauqua is presented by Humanities Nebraska, in partnership with the City of Norfolk, the Elkhorn Valley Museum and Research Center and Northeast Community College. Additional support is provided by the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the State of Nebraska. Other sponsors are J. Paul and Eleanor McIntosh and the Norfolk Library Foundation.

Those interested in donating to the Chautauqua may contact Betty Froehlich at the Norfolk Area Community Foundation Fund at betty@norfolkgivesback.org. Anyone interested in volunteering to help with Chautauqua may contact Sarah Warneke at the Northeast Library System at nelsdirector@gmail.com.