



NEWS RELEASE

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Ottawa and Hesston to host 1930s Chautauqua

Topeka, KS – Ottawa and Hesston will be the Kansas host communities for this summer's *Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties* Chautauqua. The festival of learning will be in Ottawa June 3-7 and Hesston June 10-14. The *Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties* Chautauqua is a partnership between the Kansas Humanities Council, Franklin County Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Hesston Chautauqua Committee, and the Nebraska Humanities Council. The Chautauqua is made possible by We the People, a grant initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The economic uncertainty, government programs, environmental devastation, and artistic movements of the 1930s are explored in the *Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties* Chautauqua. The five-day event features first-person portrayals of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Senator Huey Long of Louisiana, Pentecostal leader Aimee Semple McPherson, Harlem Renaissance writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, and humorist Will Rogers. Humanities professionals portray these famous figures of the 1930s under a tent in the city park each evening. Following each evening's presentation, the audience has an opportunity to ask questions of the famous historical figures as well as the scholar who created the portrayal.

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“The themes explored in the *Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties* Chautauqua are as timely today as they were in the 1930s,” said Julie Mulvihill, Executive Director of the Kansas Humanities Council. “Ottawa and Hesston audiences can expect a lively discussion of historical and contemporary topics under the Chautauqua tent.”

The Chautauqua also features daily adult workshops and youth programs, including a Youth Chautauqua Camp. At the five-day camp, young people (grades 5-8) will be historians, researchers, and scriptwriters as they prepare to present their own historical characters on the Friday evening of Chautauqua.

Bright Dreams, Hard Times: America in the Thirties is a three-year Chautauqua. Beloit and Lawrence hosted the 2008 event. Colby and Belleville will host Chautauqua in 2010.

From the late 19th century to the first decades of the 20th century, touring Chautauquas combined oratory and lectures about national events with literary readings and musical entertainment that entertained and informed people about political and cultural happenings. For more than 20 years, the Kansas Humanities Council has brought the traditions of the historic Chautauqua to towns and rural communities across the state. Beginning in 1983, KHC revived the Chautauqua movement, and over 50 communities have hosted the contemporary Chautauqua, playing host to the famous and infamous from American history.

The modern-day Chautauqua has a lasting impact on all who attend, observes longtime Chautauquan Fred Krebs, who portrays Huey Long in the upcoming event. “Chautauqua is a moving experience,” says Krebs, “because it allows community members to find connections with one another.”

For a complete schedule of Chautauqua events, contact the Kansas Humanities Council at 785/357-0359, or www.kansashumanities.org.

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