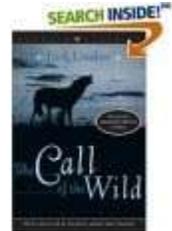


Five Kansas Communities Are Planning Big Read Projects

Posted by Shannon Roy, Continuing Education Coordinator

A number of Kansas communities have participated in Big Read projects during the past few years. Five Kansas communities have been selected to receive Big Read grants from the National Endowment for the Arts for the 2008-2009 Season. Participation in Big Read Programs and other One Book projects is part of the state's extensive celebration of reading.



The Big Read gives communities the opportunity to come together to read, discuss, and celebrate one of twenty-three selections from American and world literature.

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Big Read in Iola will use *To Kill a Mockingbird* by

Harper Lee, as will the project in the City of Topeka. Johnson County will be working with *Old School* by Tobias Wolff, one of the lesser known Big Read classics. Junction City will build their activities around *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. Wichita will work with the lyrical *My Antonia* by Willa Cather.

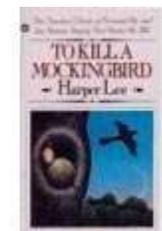


The latest Big Read grantees represent 46 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. To date, the NEA has given more than 500 grants to support local Big Read projects.

"Everything the NEA does we do in partnership. I am delighted to announce our 208 new partners in The Big Read. Some are new to the program, some are returning, but all of them have answered the call to action to get our country reading again," said NEA Chairman Dana Gioia.



The selected organizations will receive Big Read grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000 to promote and carry out community-based reading programs featuring activities such as read-a-thons, book discussions, lectures, movie screenings, and performing arts events. Participating communities also receive high-quality, free-of-charge educational materials to supplement each title, including Reader's, Teacher's, and Audio Guides.



"With this latest round of grants, I am proud to say that The Big Read has supported more than 500 public library partnerships," said Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the NEA's lead federal partner for The Big Read. "Through this program, public libraries continue to demonstrate their value in communities as centers of engagement, literacy, and lifelong learning. I am particularly delighted by the innovative public programming born out of library and museum collaborations."

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the

center of American culture. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. Support for The Big Read is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Transportation for The Big Read is provided by Ford. For more information about The Big Read please visit www.neabigread.org.

The National Endowment for the Arts 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 nation's largest annual 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.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. For more information, please visit www.ims.gov.

Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit www.artsmidwest.org.