Gov. Ricketts, First Lady launch NE150 Celebration’s “Nebraska Experience” program

School bus grant program will help fund fourth grade field trips to State Capitol, historical sites

Photos [here](#).

(Lincoln, Neb.) Governor Pete Ricketts and First Lady Susanne Shore today launched the Nebraska150 Celebration’s Nebraska Experience program, an initiative designed to help facilitate fourth grade field trips to the Nebraska State Capitol and other historically and culturally significant sites throughout the 2017-18 academic year.

“Fourth grade in Nebraska is such a special time,” said Governor Ricketts. “It’s when children learn about our state’s rich history - from mammoths roaming the plains in Lincoln County to skyscrapers towering over the Omaha metro. We want to ensure that during our state’s sesquicentennial, as many fourth graders as possible have the opportunity to get out of the classroom and see what they are learning about in their textbooks.”

First Lady Shore said, “Our heartfelt thanks go out to the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC) for their willingness to take on this enormous project as well as the Peter Kiewit Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE), and NextEra Energy Resources for their generous sponsorship of the program. The Nebraska Experience will certainly help bring history to life for Nebraska’s fourth graders, but we believe it will also illustrate that they live in a truly amazing place. We want to build on the pride they already have for being Nebraskans and encourage them to stay here and help write the next chapter of our state’s history.”

A partnership with the NAC, the Nebraska Experience is modeled after the organization’s long-time School Bus for the Arts Grant program. The Nebraska150 Celebration will underwrite the cost of school buses as well as admission fees to museums and other venues across the state.

All Nebraska-accredited public and private schools are eligible to participate as well as Nebraska-based nonprofit organizations that have federal tax-exempt status (501c3) that serve homeschool students residing in Nebraska.

In addition to the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln, schools can also elect to visit one of the following 11 designated sites:

- Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Site in North Platte
- Chimney Rock National Historic Site in Bayard
- Durham Museum in Omaha
- Homestead National Monument in Beatrice
- Knight Museum in Alliance
- Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center in Chadron
- Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney
- Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln
- Niehardt Center in Bancroft
Sites were selected based on their historic or cultural significance or because their collections provide an outstanding interpretive experience. An effort was also made to select sites throughout the state to make the program accessible to all Nebraska schools.

School superintendents are encouraged to apply for the Nebraska Experience before July 1, 2017, for the upcoming school year. Applications can be submitted online at www.ne150.org/experience.

NAC Executive Director Suzanne Wise said, "Nebraska’s cultural heritage is a key part of what makes us Nebraskans, and we want to make sure every fourth grader has the opportunity to experience the Nebraska State Capitol or enjoy the offerings of other sites that may be easier to reach."

Steve Grandfield, executive vice president of strategy and innovation at BCBSNE, said, "Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska believes in investing in our state border to border. We saw the opportunity to support the Nebraska Experience as one tied to our desire to positively affect education. Understanding the culture and history of our state leads to greater pride and investment, in this case with our youth having impactful visits to many state treasures."

Phil Clement, project manager at NextEra Energy Resources, the world’s largest generator of renewable energy from the wind and the sun, said, "NextEra Energy Resources is proud to participate in the Nebraska150 Celebration by helping to provide the fourth graders of the state the experience of a lifetime. Our wind energy centers bring good jobs and investment to Nebraska communities, and with this school tour program, we are pleased to invest in the state’s most valuable resource – our children and their education."

Following are some of the requirements for the program. A more complete list is available online at www.ne150.org/experience.

- Participation in the Nebraska Experience is limited to students enrolled in fourth grade during the 2017-18 academic year, Aug. 1, 2017, through June 30, 2018, including teachers and chaperones.
- The field trip must involve travel to the Nebraska State Capitol or another approved site.
- The deadline for applications is the first of each month beginning July 1, 2017. Applications must be received at least four weeks prior to the start date of the field trip.
- An individual school building may receive only one grant during the 2017-18 academic year for all of its fourth grade students.
- School districts with multiple elementary schools are encouraged to combine school buildings into one grant application.
- The district superintendent or a designated representative must submit all grants applications.
- Grant amounts will be based on number of students and the distance from the school building to the field trip destination.
- Each school must have proof of a confirmed reservation with one of the approved sites prior to submitting the grant application. A digital copy of this confirmation is required.
- Applications will be reviewed in the order in which they are received. The program will close once all funds are awarded.

About Nebraska150
Throughout 2017, Nebraska celebrates its Sesquicentennial or 150th year of statehood. The Nebraska150 Celebration is a time to honor the state’s heritage, celebrate its growth and plan for its future. A group of volunteers have created 13 key programs and events for all Nebraskans with the goal of bridging communities, connecting people and enhancing state pride. For more information, visit www.ne150.org.

About the Nebraska Arts Council
The Nebraska Arts Council (NAC), a state agency, provides numerous grants, services and special initiatives that help sustain and promote the arts throughout Nebraska. The Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Nebraska Legislature and National Endowment for the Arts support the NAC. For more information, visit www.artscouncil.nebraska.gov.
About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska (BSBCNE)
BCBSNE is a community-based, member-owned health insurance company serving Nebraskans for more than 75 years. BCBSNE is committed to providing stability and security to Nebraska families and is leading the way in supporting patient-focused care. The state’s largest health insurance company and the only one headquartered in Nebraska, is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, visit www.nebraskablue.com.

About NextEra Energy Resources
NextEra Energy Resources, together with its affiliated entities, is the world’s largest generator of renewable energy from the wind and sun. NextEra Energy Resources, LLC is a clean energy leader and is one of the largest wholesale generators of electric power in the U.S., with approximately 19,990 megawatts of generating capacity in 29 states and Canada. NextEra subsidiaries own and operate one wind energy center in Jefferson County and Gage County, Nebraska, capable of generating approximately 74.8 megawatts. The company and is currently developing another wind energy center in Webster County capable of generating up to 89 megawatts. For more information, visit www.nexteraenergyresources.com.

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