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The MAX offers free admission to military families through Blue Star program

MERIDIAN, Miss. – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) will once again join museums nationwide in offering free admission to active-duty American military families during the 2024 Blue Star Museums program. This year’s initiative begins May 18, Armed Forces Day, and concludes on Sept. 2.

Last year, more than 1,700 museums participated in the Blue Star program, a broad collaboration that includes the National Endowment for the Arts, the Blue Star Families support organization and the U.S. Department of Defense.

The MAX welcomed nearly 400 people through the program previously and its staff is eager to see more military families – from across Mississippi and beyond – enjoy the museum’s exhibits and programs.

“The MAX is pleased to serve as an important cultural resource for military families associated with NAS Meridian, the Air National Guard 186th Air Refueling Group and other military installations in the region,” said MAX President and CEO Penny Kemp. “The Blue Star effort strengthens our connections with the military community and we hope to see strong interest this year.”

The Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Vivek Murthy, recently noted that exposure to the arts is vital to a “third dimension” of wellness – in addition to physical and mental health – that “has to do with our heart and soul: the part of us that feels inspiration, that feels joy, the part of us that feels deep love for another human being ... I believe that the arts are a very, very powerful resource when it comes to nourishing the health of the spirit.”

The Blue Star program offers one way for The MAX to show appreciation to military service members, who provide a critical source of volunteer support for the nonprofit during major events such as the spring Sipp & Savor festival.

The MAX is reaching out to military bases around the region, encouraging fun trips to Meridian. Elsewhere in the state, participating museums include the Eudora Welty House and Garden and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in Jackson and the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs. More program details are available at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

The free admission program is available for those currently serving in the United States military—Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Space Force, members of the Reserves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps, as well as up to five family members. Qualified members must show a Geneva

Convention common access card (CAC), DD Form 1173 ID card (dependent ID), DD Form 1173-1 ID card or the Next Generation Uniformed Services (Real) ID card for entrance into a participating Blue Star Museum.

About The MAX: The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience explores the state's creative legacies in one immersive attraction. Here, visitors of all ages explore the global impact of Mississippians on music, literature, acting, painting, cuisine, and other arts. The MAX honors our state's extraordinary contributions and inspires the next generation through a unique blend of interactive exhibits. Come discover the Mississippi roots of some of the world's arts and entertainment icons – Elvis Presley, Oprah Winfrey, B.B. King, Faith Hill, Sela Ward, Eudora Welty, and Jim Henson, to name just a few.

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