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Military Families Enjoy Free Admission to The MAX All Summer

Program runs from May 16 through September 7 for both active duty and veterans

MERIDIAN, Miss. (May 14, 2026) – The Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience (The MAX) is joining museums nationwide in offering free admission to all military families, including veterans, during the 2026 Blue Star Museums program. The 2026 program kicks off on Armed Forces Day, Saturday, May 16, and ends on Labor Day, Monday, September 7.

More than 2,000 museums participate in the Blue Star program each year, 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 has welcomed hundreds of people through the program and is eager to see more military families – from across Mississippi and beyond – explore the thriving arts and cultural center, including the new exhibition *John Jennings: Build Your World*, opening Saturday, June 20.

“The MAX is pleased to serve as a gateway to arts and culture across the state for military families associated with Naval Air Station Meridian, the Air National Guard 186th Air Refueling Wing, and other military installations in the region, as well as our veterans,” 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 Blue Star program offers a 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 Sipp & Savor, The MAX’s annual food and drink experience. More details about the program and a complete listing of participating museums can be found at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

Free admission is available for those currently serving in the United States military – Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Space Force, Reserves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, and NOAA Commissioned Officer Corps – and up to five family members. The MAX is extending this offer to include military veterans and their families. 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 (The MAX) is an arts and cultural center in the heart of downtown Meridian that celebrates Mississippi's creative legacy through interactive exhibits, workshops, and live performances. The multipurpose facility contains a two-story Hall of Fame celebrating the state's groundbreaking artists like Walter Anderson, William Faulkner, Morgan Freeman, Jim Henson, B.B. King, Elvis Presley, and Leontyne Price to name a few, along with over 20,000 square feet of interactive exhibits, art studios, a recording studio, and performance spaces. Every visit to The MAX is a unique experience that leaves visitors feeling inspired and in awe of Mississippi's global impact on music, literature, art, and entertainment. Visit www.msarts.org to learn more.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

Established by Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States.

About Blue Star Families

Blue Star Families (BSF) is the nation's largest military and veteran family support organization. Its research-driven approach builds strong communities with a focus on human-centered design and innovative solutions. A "blue star family" is the family of a currently serving military member, including active duty, National Guard, reserve forces, and those transitioning out of service. Since its founding in 2009, BSF has delivered

more than \$336 million in benefits and impacts more than 1.5 million people annually through an expansive network of chapters and outposts.

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