

8-20-2015

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Recommended Citation

Office of Marketing and Communications, "Governors State University Announces the Kick-Off of The Big Read" (2015). *Press Releases*. Paper 699.

http://opus.govst.edu/press_releases/699

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From: [Office of Communications](#)
Subject: Governors State University Announces the Kick-Off of The Big Read
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2015 9:43:15 AM
Attachments: [fahrenheit451_287x132.jpg](#)
[TBR-Logo-Partners.jpg](#)

August 20, 2015
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For Immediate Release

Governors State University Announces the Kick-Off of The Big Read

Chicago's Southland will come together to read and celebrate Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451

University Park, IL—Governors State University kicks off its Big Read program in celebration of Ray Bradbury's science fiction masterpiece Fahrenheit 451 with a full lineup of events starting on September 26, in conjunction with Banned Book Week. The Big Read in Chicago's Southland is presented in partnership with six area libraries, The Michelle Obama School for the Arts and GSU's Library, Visual Arts Gallery, Center for Performing Arts and Knowledge Exchange.

Participating libraries include Steger/Chicago Heights Library District, Manteno, Peotone, Crete, Richton Park, and University Park Libraries. Library events include a book sale, toddler story time, movie viewings and discussions, a teen graphic novel book discussion, teen play scenes/spoken word acts, events for youth on fire safety and more.

The kick-off event at GSU will feature GSU's Theatre and Performance Studies students performing a scene from Fahrenheit 451, under the direction of Dr. Patrick Santoro. Imagine if all books were banned! Imagine if books weren't the enemy, but you were! This event will take place in GSU's Hall of Governors Monday, September 28 at noon, and is free and open to the public. Tickets for the public performances of Fahrenheit 451 at GSU's Center for Performing Arts on November 7-8 will be available for purchase at this event and via the web site CenterTickets.net.

A keynote address will be given Wednesday, November 4 at 6 p.m. in GSU's Engbretson Hall, delivered by authorized Ray Bradbury biographer, Sam Weller. Weller, who resides in Chicago, wrote *The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury*, which became a Los Angeles Times best seller, winner of the 2005 Society of Midland Authors Award for Best Biography, and a Bram Stoker Award finalist. He has given over 250 talks worldwide, and currently teaches in the Department of Creative Writing at Columbia College Chicago.

GSU President Elaine P. Maimon says, "The Big Read is a perfect example of GSU's commitment to integrating the arts in all we do. Students and community members will experience Fahrenheit 451 in several forms—novel, play, and lecture. Many thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts for supporting GSU's identity as a public square."

A program of the National Endowment for the Arts, The Big Read broadens our understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book. Managed by Arts Midwest, this initiative offers grants to support innovative community reading programs designed around a single book. Governors State University as a regional hub for learning in Chicago's southland is one of 75 communities nationwide participating in The Big Read from September 2015-June 2016. From September 26–November 8, 2015 GSU will celebrate Fahrenheit 451 with a full calendar of events including many free events hosted by our local library partners.

Visit http://neabigread.org/communities/?community_id=2232 for a complete list of dates and times.

For more information on library events, please contact Alexis Sarkisian at asarkisian@govst.edu or 708.534.7514. You also may view a full calendar of events for The Big Read via the Center's web page at CenterTickets.net.

Governors State University serves more than 5,500 undergraduate and graduate students with 64 degree and 24 certificate programs that prepare them for success in business, industry, healthcare, the arts and education. As a state university, GSU is committed to providing high-quality, accessible, and responsible higher education opportunities. GSU is located 40 miles south of Chicago in University Park, IL and offers the most affordable undergraduate tuition and fees in the state. GSU is committed to embracing diversity and academic excellence.

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. For more information, visit arts.gov.

Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people's lives. Based in Minneapolis, 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 artsmidwest.org.

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