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## **Grinnell Launches Campaign to Renovate Veterans Building**

GRINNELL -- The Grinnell Veterans Memorial Commission is celebrating the Independence Day holiday with the announcement of a \$1.8 million fundraising campaign to renovate the Veterans Memorial Building.

The project seeks to visually match local prairie style architecture and create an anchor structure in Grinnell's Central Park. The keystone feature of the renovated building will be the new Prairie Star Residency. The campaign will seek funds necessary to restore the Veterans Memorial Building, which is more than 60 years old. The residency will be a program of the Veterans Memorial Commission who will contract with an entity to serve as operations manager. The residency will create opportunities for artists, academicians, curators and others to gather for a specific period of time to work together in a space away from their usual environment and obligations.

The residency program will maintain a special focus on veterans within an artist program and uniquely position Grinnell nationally as the only multi-artist residency program within a veterans memorial. The Veterans Memorial Building will include six apartments, working art shops in the lower level, five private studios, and a lounge area on the main floor to accommodate the residency. The building will also include a balcony overlooking the newly renovated Central Park and significant public spaces for use by local veterans.

"This concept is unique, creating a national artist-in-residence project that includes veterans while bringing to Grinnell many creative people from across the country," said Leo Lease, Veterans Memorial Commission chair,

The group leading the private fundraising campaign connected to the use of the building for the Prairie Star Residency is diverse and includes local members Craig Cooper, George Drake, Randy Hotchkins, Tom Lacina, and Cynthia Sherman. The committee also includes veteran and former Congressman Leonard Boswell, and Grinnell College alum and former Des Moines Social Club executive director Pete DeKock. Bill Menner of the The Bill Menner Group, former Iowa state director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and Nicole Behrens, Executive Director of the Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation, will provide fundraising guidance. Mary Adamek, PhD, director of the Music Therapy program at the University of Iowa, will assist the committee with programming development around arts therapies as part of the Prairie Star Residency.

The committee will work to identify donors state-wide in order to raise \$1.8 million of the \$2.2 million project cost.

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At the same time, there will be a local effort to build awareness of an upcoming Grinnell property tax levy vote in November 2017, which will provide local funding for 20 years for the “restoration, maintenance and operation” of the Veteran’s Building. The levy is expected to provide approximately \$112,000 per year for 20 years for operational costs of the building.

“The levy is essential to this project and will form the backbone of the ongoing operations,” said Tom Lacina, local Grinnell arts promoter who envisioned the project. “It also should encourage state-wide funding by showing the depth of commitment of the citizens of Grinnell to carrying the weight of the ongoing financial requirements.”

Lacina has had experience building a successful artist residency. The Grin City Collective operated a residency program on Lacina’s farm north of Grinnell for the last 10 years beginning in 2006.

Renovation construction is expected to begin in 2018 with completion in 2019 and the Prairie Star Residency accepting the first artists in 2020. Additional information can be found online at [www.prairiestarresidency.org](http://www.prairiestarresidency.org). Donations can be made at that same website through a link to Greater Poweshiek Community Foundation.