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For Immediate Release

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**Rapid City Public Library celebrates *Fahrenheit 451*
in the 2008 Big Read**

Rapid City, SD – March 31, 2008 – It's been controversial since its publication in 1953. Ray Bradbury's classic science fiction novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, has been on many banned books lists and even today raises some eyebrows with its dark depiction of a futuristic society gone awry, where firemen burn books and people live empty lives in a drug and media-induced haze.

Fahrenheit 451 challenges the reader with a lot of themes still very relevant today, including censorship, intellectual freedom, and personal responsibility. That makes it a great choice for the Big Read, a national program to restore reading to the center of American culture.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The Rapid City Public Library is one of 127 libraries, municipalities, and arts, culture, higher education, and science organizations to receive a grant to host a Big Read celebration of one of 16 classic novels from January-June 2008. The NEA launched the Big Read nationally in 2007.

Over the month of April, the Rapid City Public Library will host a number of events that touch on the themes of *Fahrenheit 451*. On Sunday, April 20th, there will be a discussion of the book at the downtown library led by Kathy Antonen of the South Dakota School of Mines, a literature professor and humanities scholar. A week later there will be an opportunity to view the 1966 movie based upon it. Starring Oskar Werner and Julie Christie and directed by Francois Truffaut, *Fahrenheit 451* will play at the Elks Theatre (512 6th St.) at 6:30 pm on Monday, April 28th and is sponsored by the library in partnership with the Voices of the Heartland Independent Film Group. A discussion will follow the movie.

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To interest teens in the book, the library is sponsoring three contests – essay, art and video – where they can creatively express their reaction to the novel. And while younger children won't be involved with *Fahrenheit 451*, they haven't been left out of Big Read programming. At selected April story time sessions, a fireman from the Rapid City Fire Department will read a story and a fire truck will visit the library. (See the library's Big Read website – www.rapidcitylibrary.org/BigRead for a list of events with dates, times and locations.)

The Rapid City Fire Department has partnered with the library in a number of ways for the Big Read. In addition to their participation in story time events, they've loaned fire department materials for library displays, and will be participating in the April 16th Lunch and Learn program on Fire Safety and Prevention. Lunch and Learn is a once-a-month noontime event at the downtown library where the public can come in for an hour's presentation on a wide variety of subjects and receive a complimentary lunch (prior RSVP required). A representative from the State Department of Agriculture-Wildland Fire Suppression Division, and Scott Rausch, an individual who saved his home from a forest fire by applying recommended prevention techniques, will also be part of the April Fire Safety program.

The downtown library will feature a display of banned books in the lobby during April, and a *Fahrenheit 451* display in the upper stairwell display area. They will also be asking patrons and visitors to participate in a month long "What Book Would You Save?" survey. Anyone can "place a vote" for the book that's had the biggest impact on their lives either by filling out a paper ballot at the library or by voting online at www.rapidcitylibrary.org/BigRead.

There are a lot of reasons why the library considers *Fahrenheit 451* an ideal Big Read choice and one of the lesser-known ones is because *Fahrenheit 451* was written in a library. Ray Bradbury typed it out in about nine days on a rented typewriter in the basement of a UCLA library in California. He was escaping the noise and chaos at home caused by two small children.

Seven other South Dakota communities are hosting Big Read/*Fahrenheit 451* events including Madison, Martin, Pierre, Ridgeview, Scotland, Sioux Falls and Spearfish. The Big Read in South Dakota is additionally sponsored by the South Dakota Humanities Council's Center for the Book. The Big Read gives readers all across the state a chance to read *Fahrenheit 451*, talk with friends and family about it, explore it fully through discussions and events, and in doing so realize how enriching and important reading is to all of us.

The Rapid City Public Library has served the Rapid City area since 1879, and now has two locations, the downtown library at 610 Quincy Street and the north library within General Beadle Elementary School at 10 Van Buren St. Both offer print and electronic resources for adults, young adults and children as well as computers and internet access and a variety of programs and events. In March 2008, USA Today selected the Rapid City Public Library downtown as one of the nation's 10 greatest places to "Find a Nook and Read a Book."

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