

Smithsonian Exhibition on World War II Visits Rural Communities in Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana

Reproductions of colorful posters, circulated throughout the United States during World War II to mobilize the nation's support for the overseas war effort, will travel simultaneously to three Southern states as part of a Smithsonian tour. "Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front, 1941-1945" opened this summer in Springfield, Tenn., Decatur, Miss., and on Oct. 15 it opens in Homer, La. Three versions of the exhibition have been created in order to travel in these states until summer 2002.

The exhibition – which is designed to serve libraries, historical societies and museums in rural areas – features 25 reproductions of WWII posters from the collections of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, Behring Center.

"Produce for Victory" focuses on the images—displayed in factories, shop windows, schools and other public places around the country—which rallied a nation to take the steps necessary at home to support soldiers in the field. Citizens were instructed to conserve automobile fuel by carpooling, to organize scrap drives and to grow victory gardens to reduce the burden on the nation's farmers growing crops for overseas consumption.

"Produce for Victory" is one of a series of exhibitions circulating nationally as part of Museum on Main Street, a collaborative partnership between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and state humanities councils across the country in cooperation with the Federation of State Humanities Councils, to serve museums, libraries and historical societies in rural America. Major funding to date has been provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Hearst Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Generous support also has been provided by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution's Special Exhibitions Fund and Educational Outreach Fund.

"We are very pleased to be able to bring Produce for Victory to our area," said Don Simmons, assistant director of the Mississippi State Humanities Council. "We hope that it will inspire many to become even more involved in the cultural life of our community."

The exhibition, which will also examine regional homefront history and honor homefront heroes, is augmented by locally lent materials such as ration cards, victory garden cookbooks, plane spotter guides, children's toys and other memorabilia. Public programs will include Veterans Day parades, Rosie the Riveter look-alike contests, scrap metal clean-up drives, Jitterbug dance classes,

victory gardens, flyovers and WWII veterans reunions. Collected oral histories will document each community's contribution to the war effort.

"Rural communities are starving for projects like this," said Kathy Jordan of Georgia's Okefenokee Heritage Center, a previous participant in Museum on Main Street.

"'Produce for Victory' provided the 'A-Hah!' factor that the museum has been missing," remarked the director of the Kitsap County Historical Museum in Bremerton, Wash. "Now councilmen and community leaders are taking notice of us and our great programs."

Each year, SITES shares the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside of Washington, D.C. One of the Smithsonian's four National Programs, SITES makes available a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown not only in museums but also wherever people live, work, and play, including libraries, science centers, historical societies, community centers, botanical gardens, schools and shopping malls. In 2002, SITES will celebrate 50 years of connecting Americans to their shared cultural heritage. Exhibition descriptions and tour schedules are available at www.si.edu/sites.

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