

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Grand Opening Celebration Set for Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center**

***Event Speakers to Include Tom Brokaw, Sen. Daniel Inouye, Judge Lance Ito and Boyhood Friends Sec. Norman Mineta, Sen. Alan Simpson***

POWELL, Wyo. (July 28, 2011) – The grand opening of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation’s long awaited Interpretive Learning Center will offer the public a unique chance to tour the new museum free of charge from Saturday, Aug. 20, through Monday, Aug. 22, and hear nationally renowned speakers participating in key events during the weekend-long celebration, according to Executive Director Steve Leger.

“When the Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center opens its doors to the public for the first time next month, it will mark the culmination of a preservation effort that has involved the communities of Cody and Powell, Wyo., and many Japanese Americans who were incarcerated at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center during World War II,” said Leger. “It will be an important new museum and an exciting new visitor attraction for the region,” he stated.

According to Leger, former internees, descendants and supporters across the nation will be traveling to the area to participate in the weekend-long celebration. The public is invited to participate in all events, including a dedication ceremony and other activities at the Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center throughout the day on Saturday, Aug. 20. Tours of the Interpretive Learning Center will follow the dedication ceremony taking place at 10 a.m., and entertainment and refreshments will be available. For those who wish to tour the Interpretive Learning Center at a less crowded time, it will remain open until 8 p.m. on Saturday, and on Sunday and Monday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Parking will be available in an adjacent unpaved area.

“The dedication ceremony and opening of the doors of the Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center is a momentous event for the region and promises to be an enjoyable and enlightening experience for the community,” said Leger. “I urge everyone to visit us during the grand opening weekend,” he added.

#### **Dinner Events Open to the Public**

The Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation also is planning two dinner events at the Park County Fairgrounds scheduled for Friday, Aug. 19, and Saturday, Aug. 20, and tickets are available for purchase via the registration form on the web site [www.heartmountain.org](http://www.heartmountain.org) or by contacting the local office at 307-764-2320. Preregistration is required for attendance at the dinners.

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Award-winning broadcast journalist and author Tom Brokaw will be the special guest speaker for the pilgrimage dinner on Fri., Aug. 19, with a reception starting at 6:00 p.m., at the Park County Fairgrounds in Powell. Currently a special correspondent for NBC News, Brokaw's best-selling book, "The Greatest Generation," includes the story of the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Tickets for the Friday casual-style dinner are \$45 per person.

A grand opening banquet is set for Saturday, Aug. 20, also at the Park County Fairgrounds, with a reception starting at 6 p.m. The program includes a panel of leaders from across the country will comment on legal, psychological and legislative perspectives of the Japanese American experience, and how lessons from the past inform today's civil rights discussions. The panel will include Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Lance Ito, a respected advocate for civil rights and judicial reform, whose parents were incarcerated at Heart Mountain; Irene Hirano Inouye, president of the US-Japan Council; and Dr. Melba Vasquez, President of the American Psychological Association. Tickets for the Saturday banquet are available for \$75 per person, \$25 for children.

### **Dedication Ceremony to Reunite Old Friends**

The Saturday dedication ceremony will begin at 10 a.m., adjacent to the Interpretive Learning Center, and will feature a keynote address from Hawaii Sen. Daniel Inouye, a World War II hero who worked to pass the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, granting token redress payments to surviving Japanese Americans incarcerated during the war and a formal apology.

Introducing Sen. Inouye at the ceremony will be two statesmen who famously met at Heart Mountain as Boy Scouts when one was incarcerated there with his family and the other belonged to a troop in his nearby hometown of Cody. Former U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson, who serves on the advisory council of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, and former Congressman and Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, became lifelong friends and long-time colleagues. Mineta will also be participating in the banquet panel Saturday evening.

Following the ceremony and throughout the day – in addition to Sunday and Monday – the public will be able to tour the new Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center. It will house permanent exhibits, artifacts and interactive displays in a barracks-like structure that captures a sense of everyday life at Heart Mountain. Visitors will learn about the forced removal of people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, their arrival at Heart Mountain, how families struggled to live under harsh conditions and, finally, the challenges of rebuilding their lives after the war.

Visitors also can experience the existing paved, 1,000-ft. loop walking tour with informational kiosks. The Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center is located on Road 19, off Highway 14 between Cody and Powell, 60 miles east of Yellowstone National Park. More information can be found at [www.heartmountain.org](http://www.heartmountain.org).

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