



## News release

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### **Gateway kicks off NEA Big Read with community event**

*'True Grit' focus of this year's effort*

Gateway Technical College invites the public to attend its NEA Big Read community kickoff event starting at 6 p.m. Oct. 7 to celebrate the array of activities which will be held in connection with the Charles Portis classic "True Grit."

Writer Jay Jennings will keynote the event with his presentation, "True Grit and the Further Adventures of Charles Portis" to be held live in the Madrigrano Auditorium of the Conference Center located on Gateway's Kenosha Campus, 3520-30<sup>th</sup> Ave. The event will also be broadcast and open for viewing in the Great Lakes Room of the Racine Building on Gateway's Racine Campus, as well as Room 112 and Room 114 of the South Building of the college's Elkhorn Campus.

"It's a tremendous honor to have received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the NEA Big Read," said Gateway NEA Big Read chairman Jason Steagall. "This is an amazing way to promote literacy.

“True Grit’ is a timeless classic and appeals to a wide audience. There is a strong female character which is excellent to promote reading among females, but there are also the traditional cowboy characters, too, which appeals to male readers.”

NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

Doors to the event will open at 6 p.m., and Jennings will begin his presentation at 7 p.m. He will discuss why “True Grit” is more than just a great genre story – it’s great literature, as well. He will also discuss Charles Portis, movie versions of the book and much more. Jennings is the editor of “Escape Velocity: A Charles Portis Miscellany,” a collection of Portis’ work.

Steagall says the book’s strong characters and interesting backdrop provide many means for exploration and interesting workshops, readings, discussions and other activities hosted by Gateway and the many groups which have partnered in this NEA Big Read. This is the first time Gateway has hosted this effort.

“True Grit’ lends itself to a wide variety of themes. There have been two movies produced with different visual interpretations, which lends itself to discussion and activities, too,” said Steagall.

“Our partners have come up with several different creative activities.”

Events will begin Oct. 1 and run until Nov. 3 at sites in Kenosha County, Racine County and Walworth County.

Several sites, including Gateway, will hand out free editions of “True Grit” to the public.

For a list of all the events, by county, and where books can be picked up, please go to [www.gtc.edu/gateway-neabigread](http://www.gtc.edu/gateway-neabigread)

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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