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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Visitor Center transfers to South Dakota Science and Technology Authority

LEAD, SD— On Jan. 7, 2022, ownership of the Sanford Lab Homestake Visitor Center (SLHVC) transferred to the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority (SDSTA). The transfer calls for the SDSTA to pay \$107,900.16* for the exhibit space, furniture, gift shop inventory, trolley and other property belonging to the Visitor Center. The Lead Area Chamber of Commerce/Visitor Center and SDSTA boards both approved the transfer in November and December, respectively.

The 8,000-square-foot building was constructed in 2015 with SDSTA funds. The facility features a gift shop; conference rooms; and an exhibit hall that highlights the rich history of Lead, as well as the research taking place at the Sanford Underground Research Facility (SURF), which is managed by the SDSTA.

“The Chamber Board is excited for the opportunity to re-align the organization with an enhanced effort toward supporting local and member businesses. We believe the Visitors Center belongs under the direction of SURF to ensure its long-term success,” said Marsha Nichols, president of the LACC Board.

“The Visitor Center’s mission is to tell the story of Lead’s rich history and mining heritage as well as the world-leading science hosted at SURF,” said Mike Headley, executive director of the SDSTA. “We see this as an opportunity to build on the great programming that has been done, while expanding K-12 STEM education and generating a greater awareness of science at SURF through public outreach programs.”

The SDSTA also has begun updating the exhibits in the Visitor Center.

“The exhibits were created five years ago, and things have changed quite a bit,” Headley said. “We want to refresh them to make sure the information we are sharing is accurate and up-to-date. We also are looking at additional enhancements that will improve accessibility for all audiences.”

Kelly Kirk, a history instructor and director of the Honors Program at Black Hills State University, will serve as the Visitor Center director and Ursula Ward, current gift shop manager at the SLHVC, will serve as the Visitor Experience Manager. Additionally, all current part-time SLHVC employees were offered positions as employees of the SDSTA.

Donation to the Handley Center

As part of the transfer, the SDSTA and SLHVC will donate \$15,000 to the Handley Center in Lead to help launch the public phase of its Capital Campaign. The campaign focuses on renovating a large section of the building to accommodate several youth groups, including youth basketball; the 4-H archery club; and the Boys and Girls Club, the only after-school program in the Lead-Deadwood School District.

“I was very emotional to hear the news of this extremely generous donation,” said Darla Auld, director of the Handley Center. “We’ve been working on this for several years, and there have been countless volunteer hours that have gone into making this dream become a reality. We are so grateful that this donation will be the first step toward the next phase of our project.”

The official launch of the Capital Campaign will take place during a ceremony on January 10, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. at the Handley Center.

**This press release has been corrected to include the Visitor Center purchase price as \$107,900.16. The original press release, send out on Friday, Jan. 7, listed the purchase price as \$88,989.99. The updated price reflects the final accounting of items transferring to the SDSTA since the original price was set.*

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