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Gaylord-Pickens Museum gets *Back to Normal*

OKLAHOMA CITY – With the opening of a new exhibit on July 7, the Gaylord-Pickens Oklahoma Heritage Museum will get back to normal – Normal, Oklahoma, that is.

Back to Normal will feature the work of Oklahoma City artist Sarah Atlee, who will be presenting a continuation of her *Normal, OK* series. Both series feature Atlee's portrait paintings depicting fictional characters named after Oklahoma towns. In conjunction with the series, Atlee has developed a book, also titled *Normal, OK*, that combines the color illustrations with fictional biographies about characters like Edmond Tulsa, Stillwater Hennessey and Wayne Payne.

“The series began as a game to play in the car: When you see a road sign that has two town names on it, pretend they are someone's first and last name, then invent a story and picture to go with that name,” said Atlee. “I've played this game enough to populate an entire imaginary community!”

Visitors to the exhibit will become immersed in the town of Normal as they learn about its inhabitants and find many similarities between the fictional setting and their own communities.

“In Normal, everyone has a second job, a quiet dream, a lost love or a former life,” said Atlee. “Normal is a town of entrepreneurs, artists, upstanding citizens, troublemakers, friends and a few enemies. I hope you enjoy your visit.”

Atlee's imaginative development of characters based around the heritage of Oklahoma towns is what made her work a fit for the Gaylord-Pickens Museum, which focuses on telling Oklahoma's story through its people.

“Sarah has created these intriguing, dynamic personalities, many of whom you wouldn't at all be surprised to find in our state,” said Karlee Chill, director of museum exhibitions for the Gaylord-Pickens Museum. “With the help of high-tech, interactive exhibits, the Museum showcases larger-than-life Oklahomans like Reba McEntire and Will Rogers, but we also pay tribute to the lesser-known, everyday people who are making a difference in our state – people who could very well be from Normal, Okla.”

Back to Normal will be featured in the Museum's Tulsa World Gallery through Sept. 19, and the pieces on display are for sale. Students visiting the Museum on field trips during the show will have an opportunity to participate in accompanying activities encouraging them to create their own Oklahoma characters and stories.

The Museum will host an Artist Talk on Saturday, July 18 from 2 to 4 p.m., at which attendees will have the opportunity to meet and have discussions with Atlee about her quirky characters. The event is open to the public and is free with Museum admission. A closing reception in celebration of Atlee and her *Back to Normal* series will be held Thursday, Sept. 10 from 5 to 7 p.m. The event is free to the public and will feature cocktails and appetizers by Cheever's Café.

Atlee's book, *Normal, OK*, is available in the Museum Store and retails for \$25.00.

To RSVP for either the Artist Talk or closing reception, contact Karlee Chill at 405.523.3206 or kc@oklahomaheritage.com. For more information about the Gaylord-Pickens Museum, call 405.235.4458 or visit www.oklahomaheritage.com.

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