



Press Contacts

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For Immediate Release

Story Swap Workshops to Collect History and Stories about Bloomington's South Loop and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge for "Cross Pollination" - An Original Community-Based Theater Production to be Performed on the grounds of the Refuge in June 2015

Event Details (at a glance):

Story Swap Workshops to help create *Cross Pollination: A Walking Theater Production on the Grounds of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge*

Share your stories about the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Bloomington's South Loop; FREE; All-Ages; Light Food & Beverages provided; No RSVP necessary

Attend any of these three workshops to share your stories:

- **Saturday, February 7 from 2:00-4:00pm**
- **Tuesday, February 24 from 10:00am-12:00pm**
- **Thursday, February 26th from 6:00-8:00pm**

Workshops are part of a series presented by PlaceBase Productions and will be held at the Bloomington Education and Visitor Center at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge located at 3815 American Boulevard East, Bloomington, MN 55425.

Bloomington, MN – January 21, 2015: PlaceBase Productions, in partnership with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, The City of Bloomington, and Bloomington Theatre and Art Center, will hold a Story Swap Workshop Series to gather stories for *Cross-Pollination*, an original, community-based theater production that will take place this summer during the Twin Cities Urban Bird Festival, June 5-7. Three Story Swap Workshops will be held at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Bloomington Education and Visitor Center on Saturday, February 7, Tuesday, February 24, and Thursday February 26 (times listed above). The stories collected at these events will help inform the script for the large-scale, site-specific theater production that will be performed by the community.

Facilitated by Ashley Hanson & Andrew Gaylord of PlaceBase Productions, Story Swap Workshops are a place to share in story, history, and memory of a significant place – in this case the Bloomington South Loop and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Whether you are an amateur historian, storyteller, artist, community enthusiast, or you just love Bloomington and want to talk about it, they want to hear your stories! Story Swap Workshops are free, open to all ages, and include light food and beverages. No RSVP required – just show up with a willingness to share!

Cross-Pollination will use site-specific musical theatre—based on stories collected and research conducted by the artists—to explore the resources and initiatives of the Refuge that make it a rich common ground where the entire South Loop can pursue community engagement and connect to the surrounding Minnesota River Valley. The original production will be performed during the Twin Cities Urban Bird Festival, June 5-7th, to celebrate the rich history, culture, and local talent of the area and to support the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge's mission.

Open auditions for this “one of a kind” production will be held in April 2015. PlaceBase will be looking for 50-100 local performers, musicians, artists, volunteers and Bloomington South Loop enthusiasts to assist with the production. Auditions will be open to all ages and abilities; no previous experience or preparation necessary.

Theater artists Ashley Hanson and Andrew Gaylord of PlaceBase Productions have successfully produced similar large-scale theater projects in the communities of Granite Falls, Fergus Falls and Saint Paul. Their productions have ranged from exploring the Minnesota River Valley through Walking and Paddling Theater on the Minnesota River, to exploring the history of mental health care through Bicycle Theater. In each production, more than 50 community members participated in the show and audiences in the hundreds came from across the state to celebrate the stories of these treasured Minnesota places. Find out more about their past projects at: www.placebaseproductions.com

PlaceBase will produce *Cross-Pollination* in partnership with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, The City of Bloomington, and Bloomington Theatre and Art Center as a demonstration project for *Creative Placemaking in the South Loop*. This initiative is funded in part by an Our Town Grant awarded to Bloomington Theatre and Art Center by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Please direct Story Swap Workshop or theater production questions to Ashley Hanson: 952.486.0533, ashley@placebaseproductions.com; MVNWR inquires, please contact Mara Koenig: mara_koenig@fws.gov, 952-858-0710; BTAC inquiries, please contact Andrea Specht: aspecht@btacmn.org, 952-563-8745.

About PlaceBase Productions – www.placebaseproductions.com

We are a production company that explores community stories through site-specific performance and the arts. Our work cultivates stewards of community identity by connecting people to their common places, stories and relationships. Our goals are to foster creativity, play and, above all, a sense of place.

About Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge - http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley/

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1976 to provide habitat for a large number of migratory waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species threatened by commercial and industrial development, and to provide environmental education, wildlife recreational opportunities, and interpretive programming for Twin Cities residents.

About Bloomington Theatre and Art Center – <http://www.btacmn.org>

BTAC is an independent 501(c)(3) arts nonprofit serving audiences and artists throughout the region. BTAC exists to enrich the cultural fabric of the communities it serves by producing high quality performing arts, visual arts, and arts education programs, and by welcoming and nurturing talent.

About *Creative Placemaking in the South Loop* - <http://www.btacmn.org/placemaking/>

Cross Pollination is one of five *Creative Placemaking in the South Loop* Demonstration Projects taking place through August 2015. *Creative Placemaking in the South Loop* is an initiative of BTAC and the City of Bloomington. The first 18 months of the initiative are funded by an “Our Town” matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Grant outcomes include the development of a long-term creative placemaking plan for the South Loop and the five demonstration projects: a creative placemaking charrette held in June 2014, a mural, an earth art installation, a community-based theater production, and an architect-designed mobile sauna. BTAC and the City are grateful to project partners Mall of America, McGough Companies, Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau, and others. The project is managed by a team of artists and planners with Creative Community Builders.