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FOR RELEASE AFTER MAY 15

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SAMA ANNOUNCES BEDFORD EXPANSION

Loretto – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art is moving into a fifth market. The Museum has officially announced plans to open the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford. The new museum, located in downtown Bedford in the historic Anderson House, is scheduled to open in the fall. A ground-breaking ceremony and press conference will be held at 10:15 a.m. on May 15 at the Anderson House, 137 East Pitt Street.

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford will be the fifth museum site in the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art system. This will mark SAMA’s first expansion in two decades since SAMA-Ligonier Valley opened in 1997. Today SAMA’s four institutions represent the longest-running museum system in the country.

“SAMA’s announced entry into the Bedford market is a reflection of our commitment to the sustainability of the arts and the Arts-in-Education, Artist-in-Residence, and Museum/Healthcare Partnership programs in the areas we serve, which includes Bedford County, and an acknowledgment of the growing importance of the Bedford community,” said James Cayce, President of the Museum’s Board of Trustees. “SAMA looks forward to becoming part of the dynamic of downtown Bedford.”

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford will feature six galleries, rotating exhibitions, conference and meeting spaces and installations of Anderson House memorabilia. The multi-faceted, community-based museum will serve as a command post for community arts organizations and will offer a robust schedule of events, including art classes and workshops, exhibition receptions, and an annual fundraiser. SAMA will soon begin work on retrofitting and refurbishing the Anderson House to meet museum standards in anticipation of the fall opening.

“As Mayor of Bedford Borough, the recent announcement of SAMA’s intent to add a fifth museum in the Anderson House, one of Bedford Borough’s historic treasures, is very exciting for myself, our town and our county,” said Bedford Mayor William Leibfreid. “Partnering with SAMA will have a positive impact on existing and future businesses and offer greater enjoyment of Historic Bedford for citizens and visitors. I, along with members of the

Council, as well as our community partners and leaders, are excited that SAMA has chosen Bedford as their newest museum location. I welcome SAMA to Bedford, our beautiful, progressive, historic and safe town. A place we can all call home and be proud of.”

SAMA’s Bedford expansion project began in the fall of 2015 when museum officials were invited to meet with Bedford Borough Council to discuss the project. SAMA recently added four Board of Trustees members from Bedford: Mari-Pat Beene, Jerry Hawk, Dean Lemley and Steve George. It was George who initiated the concept of SAMA’s Bedford museum.

“The excitement over this project has been building for some time now,” said SAMA Executive Director G. Gary Moyer. “Local businesses, community leaders, SAMA’s board members and museum staff eagerly awaited the formal announcement that the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford would become a reality. The interest, enthusiasm and support we received throughout the exploratory phase of the project were outstanding. Meetings with the Bedford Borough Council and Borough Manager Barbara Diehl; Downtown Bedford, Inc.; County Commissioners; former PA Senator John Wozniak; PA Senator Wayne Langerholc; and PA Representative Jesse Topper; as well as other organizations, businesses and individuals were inviting and positive.”

The new museum will enhance Bedford’s historic district and expand the county’s arts community, while also driving economic impact. According to a report by Pfaffman + Associates, a Pittsburgh firm hired by SAMA to provide a feasibility study on the Bedford expansion, “a fifth SAMA museum at the Anderson House offers great potential for creating an important long-term cultural resource that would be mutually beneficial to both the organization and the community.” It is estimated that the new museum would welcome between 8,000 and 10,000 visitors annually, and yearly economic impact is estimated at over \$2 million.

“Museums represent an economic driver in the communities where they reside,” said Moyer. “The American Alliance of Museums states that cultural tourism is a \$192 billion industry. According to the U.S. Travel Association, cultural tourists stay 53% longer and spend 36% more money than any other kind of tourist. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has reported that every dollar invested in arts and culture returns \$7 to the respective community. We are excited to expand into the Bedford market and we expect the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford to provide an economic boon to the Bedford County region.”

To fund the project, the Museum initially received a significant lead gift and matching grant from Roberta Titelman. Her late husband, Jim, was the founding Vice President of the Museum’s Board of Trustees and was actively involved with SAMA for many years. Roberta was involved in the SAMA Auxiliary and also organized trips to other museums for SAMA members. The Titelman family owned and operated Puritan Sportswear in Altoona. Roberta and Jim lived in Hollidaysburg before retiring and moving to Vero Beach, Florida.

Additionally, the Museum received a grant from the Colcom Foundation, a gift from Lynn Ashe, and a PA Keystone Planning Grant. At this writing, grant requests totaling

approximately \$600,000 are still pending, including an application for a PA Keystone Construction Grant.

“This is the most significant project that SAMA has undertaken in over twenty years,” said Moyer. “We are fortunate to have the support of the Titelman family, Lynn Ashe, the Colcom Foundation and other organizations and donors from across Bedford County. We continue to seek out other resources in order to make the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Bedford all that it can be.”

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art opened its doors in June of 1976. Located on the campus of Saint Francis College (now University) in Loretto, the Museum featured a permanent collection of 47 paintings, drawing and sculpture, as well as a group of twenty etchings by John Sloan. The Museum enjoyed significant early success through the vision, passion and leadership of Michael M. Strueber, SAMA’s first Director, and the Rev. Sean M. Sullivan, T.O.R., then president of Saint Francis College and a driving force behind the establishment of the Museum. Sullivan also was appointed the first President of SAMA’s Board of Trustees. The Museum’s early years were marked with notable exhibitions and the introduction of the annual summer Gala, an event which, forty years later, remains the most anticipated event on the Museum’s special events calendar.

Just three years into its existence, the Museum began a successful expansion campaign that would span nearly twenty years. By moving into new markets, the Museum could better serve its constituents by increasing the number of exhibitions and ancillary programming while also providing easier access to its cultural resources. The Museum’s satellite model, the oldest ongoing program of its kind in the country, was conceived by former Director Strueber. The first institution opened in Altoona in 1979, and was followed with the opening of SAMA’s Johnstown Museum in 1982 and the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Ligonier Valley in the fall of 1997.

SAMA’s commitment to its communities is perhaps best exhibited through its many educational programs. In conjunction with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, SAMA facilitates Arts-in-Education and Artist-in-Residence programs, which provide local youth with exposure to fine arts and an opportunity to work alongside professional artists. In 2003, the Museum’s residency program has branched out to meet the needs of area residents suffering from mental and physical disabilities. Through the Museum/Healthcare Partnership Program, SAMA’s trained artists and educators work with health care providers to develop residencies and workshops aimed at providing relief for patients dealing with physical pain and discomfort. Recently, the program has been expanded to include working with disabled veterans and children with autism spectrum disorder, as well as place a greater emphasis on citizens with mental handicaps. The program has benefitted more than 15,000 individuals throughout Central and Western Pennsylvania.

Over the last forty years, SAMA has been nationally accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and has become a respected constituent of the region’s cultural landscape. With a diverse schedule of exhibitions of American art, award-winning education programs, ambitious

special events and a permanent collection numbering more than 4,500 works, SAMA is able to offer quality programming to people of all ages and interests. SAMA's four museums are located in Altoona, Johnstown, Ligonier and Loretto. For more information on the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, please visit www.sama-art.org.