

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Renowned Kansas Filmmaker Kevin Willmott To Deliver 2005 University of Saint Mary Lincoln Lecture *7 p.m. Presidents' Day, Feb. 21*

(Leavenworth, Kan.)— What would our country be like today if the South had won the Civil War? Kansas filmmaker Kevin Willmott explores that question during the seventh annual University of Saint Mary Lincoln Lecture at 7 p.m. on Presidents' Day, Monday, Feb. 21. Willmott will show excerpts from his new film, "*CSA: The Confederate States of America*," which made its world premier at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. He'll discuss modern film's depiction of the reunification of the Union and the memory of the Emancipation Proclamation "in the Spirit of Lincoln." The USM Lincoln lecture series is made possible by MidAmerican Bank and Trust and is free and open to the public. The lecture will be held in Saint Joseph Dining Hall, 4100 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Leavenworth, Kan.

The evening opens with Civil War-Era Stephen Foster songs performed by the USM Concert Chorale. MidAmerican Bank President Pete Payne will then present awards to local school children who are winners of the 2005 Honest Abe Art Contest. A dessert reception follows the lecture in the Walnut Room of Mead Hall, where guests may see select items from the university's rare Lincoln collection on display. Call 913-758-6165 for more information.

Willmott's movie, "*CSA*" is part parody, part faux documentary, and is based on the premise of a southern victory in the Civil War. Willmott wrote, produced and directed the movie that film critics herald as "innovative, bold and cutting edge." "*CSA*" is scheduled for release later this spring.

USM President Sister Diane Steele thinks the audience will be intrigued by the unusual twist this accomplished filmmaker will bring to the Lincoln Lecture. "We teach our students to be critical thinkers. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and our faculty encourage openness to different ideas and perspectives. As an African-American screenwriter, director and producer, Kevin Willmott will provide a very unique perspective on what the world would have been like without the vision of President Lincoln."

Willmott, who is also an assistant professor in the film studies department at KU, says he is honored to have the opportunity to speak about Lincoln's legacy and how it relates to us today. "The more you learn about Lincoln, the more you see his greatness. Lincoln is beloved because he made the hard decisions. He tackled the complicated truths – walked the unpopular paths. For me, that is why the witness of Abraham Lincoln will always be relevant."

Willmott joins an exclusive list of past Lincoln lecturers that includes Negro Baseball League legend Buck O'Neil, Missouri Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, and Kansas governors Bill Graves and Kathleen Sebelius. The University of Saint Mary Lincoln Lecture Series was created in 1999 to acknowledge the university's vast collection of unique Lincoln memorabilia, and to celebrate Lincoln's strong Leavenworth connection.

Lincoln delivered his very first presidential campaign speech in Leavenworth in 1859 at the site where MidAmerican Bank's Delaware Branch now sits. The university's 10,000-piece Lincoln collection includes a rare original copy of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the amendment that abolished slavery. The collection was donated by Dr. Bernard Hall of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kan. Call De Paul Library Director Penelope Lonergan at 913-758-6111 to schedule a tour.

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