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Title: Chelsea District Library Opens *1968: A Folsom Redemption* September 1!

Johnny Cash is a cultural icon renowned for his award-winning music, distinctive style, authentic storytelling, and empathy towards the marginalized. Chelsea District Library (CDL) is excited to host *1968: A Folsom Redemption*—a collection of photographs and memories of two journalists lucky enough to be among a handful of eyewitnesses to the historic Johnny Cash concerts at Folsom Prison. This candid and personal photography exhibition covers a critical juncture in Cash's career, one of the twentieth century's most beloved performers. *1968: A Folsom Redemption* will be in the historic McKune Room from September 1–October 20 and will be open to the public at no charge during regular library hours and closes 30 minutes prior to the library's closing.

In January 1968, Johnny Cash was at a crossroads. His music career, in a slow decline for several years, was in need of a smash hit. He had recently straightened out his personal life, and leadership changes at his record label meant he was able to finally convince them of the merits of a live recording in a prison setting. Cash had been performing for inmates as far back as 1957, when he received a stream of requests from prisoners who identified with the man who sang "Folsom Prison Blues." This connection developed with prisoners during these concerts had made him increasingly sympathetic to those he would later call "the downtrodden."

Working as freelance journalists, photographer Dan Poush and writer Gene Beley met with Cash and his family the day before the concerts began, at the invitation of Reverend Floyd Gressett, a friend of Cash's who ministered to inmates and helped set up the show at Folsom State Prison with Recreation Director Lloyd Kelley. After practicing the set with the Tennessee Three at Hotel El Rancho the night before, on January 13, 1968, Cash, along with opening acts Carl Perkins and the Statler Brothers, performed two separate shows in the dining hall at Folsom. Notable for capturing Cash's ability to connect with his audience, the recordings crackled with the excitement of an adoring crowd. The resulting album, *At Folsom Prison*, was released four months later to critical and popular acclaim.

Beley's first-person account of those days, and his knowledge of the storylines at work behind the scenes, make this a fascinating exploration of the little-known aspects of a well-known event in popular culture.

1968: A Folsom Redemption takes the viewer right into the heart of this pivotal moment in the life and career of one of the twentieth century's most important and cherished musical personalities.

The collection of thirty-one photos features a wide range of intimate photos with friends and family to a backstage meeting with country music legend Merle Haggard with the Man in Black. This exhibition highlights Cash's golden era from the January 1968 Folsom Prison album recording to a March 1, 1969 concert in Anaheim, California when he was getting ready to launch his network television show. *1968: A Folsom Redemption* is organized by ExhibitsUSA, a program of Mid-America Arts Alliance. Special thanks to Rick Taylor Real Estate and the Friends of Chelsea District Library for their sponsorship of this exhibition.

About ExhibitsUSA

This exhibition is toured by ExhibitsUSA, a national program of Mid-America Arts Alliance. ExhibitsUSA sends more than twenty-five exhibitions on tour to over 100 small- and mid-sized communities every year. These exhibitions create access to an array of arts and humanities experiences, nurture the understanding of diverse cultures and art forms, and encourage the expanding depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities. For more about ExhibitsUSA, email MoreArt@maaa.org or visit www.eusa.org.

About Mid-America Arts Alliance

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. We achieve this primarily through our national traveling exhibition programs, innovative leadership development, and strategic grant making. We are especially committed to enriching the cultural life of historically underserved communities by providing high quality, meaningful, and accessible arts and culture programs and services. We believe in more art for more people. Additional information about M-AAA is available at www.maaa.org.

About Us: Chelsea District Library (CDL) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to engage, inspire, and equip through evolving services and resources. CDL currently serves 16,126 residents in the Chelsea library district—City of Chelsea, Lyndon and Sylvan Townships, and the portions of Lima and Dexter Townships within the Chelsea School District. For more information visit chelseadistrictlibrary.org.

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