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Altman E. Studeny and Aurora Plains Academy Selected to Create South Dakota's Ornaments for tree in D.C.

Washington, D.C. - The [National Park Foundation](#), the official charity of America's national parks, announced today that artist Altman E. Studeny and the students of Aurora Plains Academy have been chosen to design and create ornaments to be included in the 2014 Pathway of Peace in [President's Park](#) in Washington, D.C. Studeny and APA join local artists and youth from each U.S. state, territory, and the District of Columbia.

The Pathway of Peace is one of the highlights of the [National Christmas Tree Lighting](#), a national event presented by the National Park Foundation and the [National Park Service](#).

"The residents we have at Aurora Plains Academy are from towns and cities all across South Dakota, so we saw this ornament design commission as an opportunity to make a 'place-capsule' that would share the unique culture and geography of our many different homes with the rest of the nation," said Studeny, art instructor at APA, resident artist for the State of South Dakota, and founding member of the artists' collaborative South Dakotans for the Inclusive Arts. "And, as this year is our State's 125th anniversary, it is appropriate for these to be the students chosen to represent what South Dakota's offering might be to a more peaceful future in which differences aren't homogenized or stifled, but recognized as crucial to the cultural health of the communities across our State, across our country, and in the world."

With one design celebrating the unique geography found west of the Missouri River which divides the state and another representing the more agricultural East, each ornament is filled with natural materials collected from significant South Dakota sites. Agates from the badlands beds near Fairburn, pine needles from Black Hills National Forest, sweet grass and sage from the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands, rose quartz from quarries near Sioux Falls, leaves from a four-hundred year old oak in Wessington Springs, and a satchel of soil collected and combined from each of South Dakota's sixty-six counties come together inside the clear globes which house them to represent the diversity and vibrancy that can be found in rural spaces.

As one of America's oldest holiday traditions, the National Christmas Tree Lighting began on Christmas Eve in 1923, when President Calvin Coolidge lit a Christmas tree in front of 3,000 spectators on the Ellipse in President's Park. Since 1923, each succeeding President has carried on the tradition of what now has become a month-long event presented by the National Park Foundation and National Park Service. In addition to the Pathway of Peace, President's Park hosts a variety of family-oriented holiday attractions, including nightly holiday performances, and model train display.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

The National Park Foundation is the official charity of America's national parks and nonprofit partner to the National Park Service. Chartered by Congress in 1967, the National Park Foundation raises private funds to help PROTECT more than 84 million acres of national parks through critical conservation and preservation efforts, CONNECT all Americans with their incomparable natural landscapes, vibrant culture and rich history, and INSPIRE the next generation of park stewards. Find out more and become a part of the national park community at www.nationalparks.org

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