



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 14, 2026

### **Cheekwood Estate & Gardens Named a 2026 Blue Star Museum**

*Free Admission Offered to Military Personnel and Their Families Through September 7*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Cheekwood Estate & Gardens is pleased to participate in Blue Star Museums, a program that provides free daytime general admission to currently serving U.S. military personnel and their families during the summer.

The 2026 program will begin on Armed Forces Day, Saturday, May 16, 2026, and end on Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 2026.

Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and participating museums across America.

This free admission program is available for those currently serving in the United States military—Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and members of the Reserves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, NOAA Commissioned Corps—and up to five family members. Qualified members must present a valid ID upon arrival to receive this discount. The discount is not valid for special events.

In addition to Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, participating museums can be found in all 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and include history, art, and children’s museums; historical sites; botanical gardens; zoos; aquariums; and more. Learn more and find the list of participating museums at <https://www.arts.gov/initiatives/blue-star-museums>

### **America the Beautiful: National Parks & Landmarks by Rail Open until September 6**

Amid the many beautiful and inspiring things to see and enjoy at Cheekwood this summer, the timing is perfect for military families to experience an immersive exhibition celebrating America’s 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary through model trains and iconic landmarks.

Created by Applied Imagination, the exhibition features 10 running trains, more than 850 feet of track, and 25 detailed recreations of American landmarks – all crafted entirely from natural plant materials. Guests will journey from the Statue of Liberty to

the Golden Gate Bridge, with stops including the Ryman Auditorium, Graceland, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Located in the Bradford Robertson Color Garden, the limited-time exhibition is the largest and most elaborate model train display ever presented at Cheekwood. Guests may also enjoy Cheekwood's permanent TRAINS! exhibition, open year-round.

*A special thanks to the Presenting Underwriter, the Crossman Family, the Presenting Sponsor, AWC Family Foundation, and the Major Underwriter, Mary and Larry Wieck for their support of America the Beautiful: National Parks & Landmarks By Rail.*

### **Year-Round Military and First Responder Discounts at Cheekwood**

Active duty and retired military personnel who visit Cheekwood receive 50% off Gardens & Mansion tickets or Gardens Only tickets for up to five people with valid ID.

Active fire, police and EMT personnel also receive 50% off Gardens & Mansion or Gardens Only tickets for up to five people with valid ID. The discount is available year-round, but not for special events. Please present a valid ID upon arrival at admissions to receive this discount.

### **About Cheekwood Estate & Gardens**

With its intact and picturesque vistas, Cheekwood is distinguished as one of the leading Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55-acres of gardens, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and art museum with furnished period rooms and galleries devoted to American art from the 18th to mid-20th centuries. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children's Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring outdoor monumental sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood hosts seasonal festivals including Cheekwood in Bloom, Summertime at Cheekwood, Cheekwood Harvest and Holiday LIGHTS. Cheekwood is a 501c3 nonprofit charitable organization. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and nationally as a Level II Arboretum. It is a four-time voted USA Today Top 10 Botanical Garden, named the Most Beautiful Garden in Tennessee in 2025 by HGTV, in 2024 and 2025 received a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award, and in 2021 was named by Fodors as one of the 12 Most Beautiful Gardens in the American South. Cheekwood is located eight miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. It is open Tuesday through Sunday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., with extended days and hours of operation depending on the season. Visit [cheekwood.org](http://cheekwood.org) for current hours and to purchase advance tickets required for admission.

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts**

Established by Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. To learn more, visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), and [YouTube](#).

### **About Blue Star Families**

[Blue Star Families](#) (BSF) is the nation's largest military and veteran family support organization. Its research-driven approach builds strong communities with a focus on human-centered design and innovative solutions. A "blue star family" is the family of a currently serving military member, including active duty, National Guard, reserve forces, and those transitioning out of service. Since its founding in 2009, BSF has delivered more than \$336 million in benefits and impacts more than 1.5 million people annually through an expansive network of chapters and outposts. For more information, click [here](#).

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