

Girlfriends' Getaways With Artistic Flair

(NAPSA)—Girlfriends' getaways in the Valley Forge area combine art exhibits and shopping discounts with hotel overnights and a complimentary glass of wine to toast your friendship.

Museums throughout the region are exhibiting women's art as part of "Women Advancing," a celebration marking the 85th anniversary of women's right to vote.

This spring, the James A. Michener Art Museum presents "The Visual Literature of Bernarda Bryson-Shahn: Developing a Social Conscience." Now 101, like her late husband, Ben Shahn, she has devoted her life to activism through art.

The natural world is the subject of upcoming shows by two artists: Emily Brown's "The Evolving Landscape" at the James A. Michener Art Museum and Sara Steele's "Blueprints for Paradise" at the Berman Museum of Art. Steele's lush, sensual watercolors of poppies, irises and peonies encourage viewers to focus on nature's fragile beauty.

This June, an historic sacred space and its congregation are the subject of "The Lost Meeting," J. Morgan Puett's art installation in an abandoned 1836 Quaker meetinghouse. Sacred art in the form of exquisite Fraktur by a rare 19th century woman artist, Susanna Heebner, will be exhibited at the Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center. In August, contemporary faith and life issues are explored in an exhibit by the National Women of Color Quilters Network at the Mennonite Heritage Center, "Threads of Faith."

Four women's art installations at historic Eastern State Penitentiary in 2005 challenge and



"Ghost Cats" art installation.

expand the public's perceptions of prisons. Linda Brenner's eerie "Ghost Cats" is a testimony to survival, recalling the colony of cats that took up residence after the penitentiary closed in 1971. Internationally acclaimed artist Janet Cardiff's "Cellblock Seven," Judith Taylor's "The Glass House" and Alexa Hoyer's video installation offer a distinctive view of prisons.

The region's historic sites revisit women's history, exploring marriage and birth customs in the 18th century; hearth cooking; Colonial fashions; a "day in the life" of an ordinary woman; an intimate look at Martha Washington; and changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution.

For today's woman, a workshop at Peddler's Village with special guest Margaret Wolff, author of "In Sweet Company: Conversations With Extraordinary Women About Living a Spiritual Life," offers help in creating balanced and fulfilling lives.

To plan your girlfriends' getaway, visit www.womenadvancing.org, the Women Advancing Web site. Getaways include an overnight stay, complimentary wine and a discount card to the King of Prussia Mall.