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Author Will Weaver will give Commencement keynote

Summary: Author and outdoorsman Will Weaver will provide the keynote address during the Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 16, at the University of Minnesota, Morris. The annual tradition for graduating seniors, family and friends will begin at 1:30 p.m. on the campus Mall.

(April 22, 2009)-Author and outdoorsman Will Weaver will provide the keynote address during the Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 16, at the University of Minnesota, Morris. The annual tradition for graduating seniors, family and friends will begin at 1:30 p.m. on the campus Mall.

Prior to the Commencement ceremony, Weaver will sign copies of his books in the lobby of the campus Student Center beginning at 10:30 a.m. His books, *Red Earth*, *White Earth* and *Sweetland*, in the adult reading category, and *Striking Out* and *Hard Ball* for young adults will be on sale at the campus Bookstore and the booksigning.

In addition, the Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance will host a free community event featuring Weaver at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 15, at the Common Cup in downtown Morris. Weaver will speak about his work and engage in conversation with attendees. The event will also provide an opportunity for book signing. Dutch-treat refreshments will be available.

About Will Weaver

The author of *Red Earth*, *White Earth*, Weaver saw the title story of his collection, *A Gravestone Made of Wheat and Other Stories*, adapted for the 2005 independent feature, "Sweet Land," starring Alan Cumming and Oscar-winner Ned Beatty. The film was shot near Montevideo, Minn.

A native Minnesotan who grew up on a dairy farm, Weaver's novels and short stories have earned rave national reviews for their "unflinching realism." The New York Times Book Review called *A Gravestone Made of Wheat*, "a graceful collection, one that views America's heartland with a candid but charitable eye."

A Gravestone Made of Wheat & Other Stories has won many awards, including the Minnesota Book Award for Fiction. Several of the stories were performed on National Public Radio. "Sweet Land" was applauded in its national theater release: "A triumph...a movie of extraordinary tenderness" (Entertainment Weekly, 2006). In February 2007, "Sweet Land" won the independent film industry's Spirit Award for Best First Feature and is now available on DVD.

Weaver has also written several successful novels for young adults. Each novel in his Billy Baggs series (*Striking Out*, *Farm Team*, and *Hard Ball*) was honored as a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association. His novel *Memory Boy* (2001) is used widely in schools nationwide. Following *Claws* (2001), his novel *Full Service* won starred reviews and was also listed as an American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults. *Defect*, winner of the 2008 Minnesota Book Award, is the story of a young man with a miraculous birth abnormality. *Saturday Night Dirt*, a novel focused on stock car racing, was released in April 2008. A sequel, *Super Stock Rookie*, is forthcoming in May

2009.

Formerly an English professor at Bemidji State University, Weaver lives in Northern Minnesota, a region he writes from and loves. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoys hunting, fishing, canoeing and hiking with his family and friends.

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