Planning is well underway for the annual Friends of Morris Library Gala at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Organizers are announcing the date and some details of the unique event now so guests can reserve the dates on their calendars.

The gala and reception are set for October 15 and will feature the premiere of a play created just for the occasion by David Rush, professor emeritus and playwright from the university’s theater department. Entitled “To My Dear Wife,” the play is based on Morris Library’s extensive collection of Civil War era diaries and letters written by Southern Illinoisans.

The library’s Special Collections Research Center is home to numerous collections that include Civil War-era soldier diaries as well as letters to and from home. The play will be a lively and emotional conversation between a husband and wife, incorporating excerpts from actual diaries and letters.

Rush will also be using letters held by the John A. Logan Museum that were digitized by Special Collections and also are included in an online selection. Some elements of the play may be fictionalized as well, since there are fewer period letters from the wives and families at home than there are from the soldiers. Local actors and actresses will portray the play’s characters.

In addition, on October 16 there will be a brunch and a short presentation by Mike Jones, director of the John A. Logan Museum, about the role Southern Illinois played during the Civil War. Both events will take place in the library’s John C. Guyon Auditorium or first floor rotunda.

Sponsors are also now being sought for the gala. For more information about the event, being a sponsor, or to be added to the list to receive an event reminder invitation, contact Toi Hatcher at toi@foundation.siu.edu [3] or by calling 618-453-6742.

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