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National Park Service

News Release

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National Park Service Launches On-Line Travel Itinerary Featuring Historic VA Medical Centers

Washington, D.C. – In his Second Inaugural Address in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln acknowledged the nation’s responsibility “to care for him who shall have borne the battle.” That same year, the president signed the law establishing the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers to care for veterans who had volunteered to fight for the Union in the Civil War. The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, which has 11 branches, is featured in the National Park Service’s newest on-line *Discover Our Shared Heritage* travel itinerary. The itinerary is available at http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/veterans_affairs/ and can be printed as a guide.

“The homes are thought-provoking places to visit,” says National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis. “This itinerary exposes people to history and, at the same time, helps them accept President Obama’s invitation to service. When you’re connected to the stops on the itinerary, you’re connected to Veterans Affairs facilities where you can offer your skills and time.”

The branches of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers differ from other travel destinations because they still serve veterans. As active medical centers managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the branches welcome both visitors and volunteers. The itinerary provides guidance on how to make respectful visits.

The National Home branches, with their expansive, park-like campuses and impressive historic buildings, are all listed in or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Essays in the itinerary give details about the history and development of the National Home system, what life there was like for veterans in the early years, and volunteering. Descriptions of the 11 branches highlight their significance and include information on what to see, how to visit, and how to serve veterans and assist at the facilities. Maps aid in navigation to the sites, and a “Learn More” section contains additional information, including a bibliography and links to communities where the medical centers are located.

The National Park Service’s Heritage Education Services and Federal Preservation Institute produced the itinerary in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs Historic Preservation Office, the National Preservation Institute, and the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers. This itinerary is the 50th in *Discover Our Shared Heritage*, the National Park Service’s ongoing series of travel itineraries. The series supports historic preservation, promotes public awareness of history, and encourages visits to historic places throughout the country. All the itineraries can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/>.

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