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## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
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### **Historic Landmark Plaque Presented to VA Black Hills Health Care System**



*Vidal Davila, Superintendent, Wind Cave National Park, with Judy Johnson-Mekota, Deputy Director of the VA Midwest Health Care Network*

Over 120 people were in attendance at the Hot Springs VA Medical Center on Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the formal presentation of the plaque designating the site of the original Battle Mountain Sanitarium as a National Historic Landmark.

Vidal Davila, Superintendent, Wind Cave National Park, presented the plaque on behalf of the National Park Service. Judy Johnson-Mekota, Deputy Director of the VA Midwest Health Care Network and Bill Baker, Acting Associate Director/Chief, Facilities Management of the VA Black Hills Health Care System accepted the award. Special recognition was given to Patrick

Lyke, Historic Preservation Officer of the Hot Springs VAMC for his contributions and dedication to preserving the history of the facility.

“It is important that we recognize the significance that this site lends to the history of our nation’s commitment to our Veterans, and the reminder of what we have done in the past, and what we can do in the future,” said Judy Johnson-Mekota.

The Battle Mountain Sanitarium was one of eleven Veteran’s homes established by Congress between 1865 and 1930 to care for the nation’s growing number of volunteer soldiers. On May 29, 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill establishing the Battle Mountain Sanitarium., which allocated \$150,000 be appropriated to build the facility. The citizens of Hot Springs donated the land, then valued at \$50,000. The sanitarium was not intended for use as a soldier’s home, rather a short-term treatment facility for current residents who suffered from lung or respiratory problems.

Ground broke for the facility on August 13, 1903 and the main group of buildings was completed April 1, 1907. Bath houses were furnished from Mammoth Springs to all parts of the building. Two plunge

baths were supplied with hot and cold water. The sanitarium was seen as potentially useful for the thousands of malaria-stricken soldiers from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

In 1930, all 11 national homes, including Battle Mountain Sanitarium, were transferred to the Veterans Administration, now the Department of Veterans Affairs.

National Historic Landmarks are buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects that have been determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be nationally significant in American history and culture. They illustrate important contributions to the nation's historical development. The evaluation process for determining designation is rigorous, and must confirm that a property possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, technology and culture. In addition, it must physically retain a high degree of "integrity"—qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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