

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOIN IN THE CELEBRATION OF AMERICA'S HOMECOMING AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Come to the Mall Thanksgiving Weekend – Independence Mall

Philadelphia, PA (November 5, 2007) – The very first national “Thanksgiving Day,” established on November 26, 1789, was created by George Washington for “giving thanks” for the U.S. Constitution, which had been adopted two years earlier. Families and their out-of-town visitors are encouraged to skip the lines at the shopping mall and come down to Independence Mall for ***America's Homecoming*** at the National Constitution Center from Friday, November 23 through Sunday, November 25. The Center is a perfect place to celebrate this uniquely American holiday that originally honored the Constitution.

George and Martha Washington also became role models for the job that the first family plays in the American landscape. The Center currently has an exhibition that tells part of that story: *First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image*. The exhibition shows how our first ladies, including Martha Washington, played an instrumental role in shaping U.S. history. Among the 150 objects in the exhibition are Martha Washington's ambler necklace, Mary Todd Lincoln's monogrammed silver tea and coffee service, Eleanor Roosevelt's gown from the 1945 inaugural reception, and Jacqueline Kennedy's brocade silk evening dress and matching jacket.

The exhibition, developed by the Smithsonian Institute, closes on Monday, December 31, 2007. It features more than two centuries of elegant inaugural and evening gowns, clothing and jewelry, White House furnishings and china, photographs and portraits, and

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campaign and personal memorabilia. It examines the demanding duties of the presidential partner and national hostess, explores how her role has evolved from ceremonial colleague to one of international celebrity and recognized political power, and illustrates the importance of the first lady's public image to the success of a presidential administration.

One of the unique aspects of the Center's permanent exhibition is the use of live actors to tell stories in a compelling way. The Center has also incorporated a live actor in the *First Ladies* exhibit. Families will have the chance to travel back in time to get a glimpse of daily life in the White House. Between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., visitors will meet Gloria, a young White House maid, who is setting up for tea in the Vermeil Room for Jacqueline Kennedy. Gloria will share some behind the scenes stories about life in the Kennedy household and will also pass along some delightful facts and details about many of our nation's first ladies in this special holiday presentation on Friday, November 23. Gloria regularly performs on weekends, and can also be seen on Saturday, November 24 and Sunday, November 25 between 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Families can also find out more about other great American women during the *Women of Power* show, which will be held daily at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. In this interactive show, National Constitution Center demonstrators will teach guests about the role of first ladies in society and critical moments in history that have impacted women's rights.

There is something for every family member during the Center's *America's Homecoming* celebration. Children will discover what it was like growing up in America throughout different time periods as they participate in the *Growing Up, American Style* show, which will be held daily at 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. in the Grand Hall Lobby. By dressing up in different period costumes, kids will see how styles have changed over the years, and they can show off their new looks to family and friends in the Center's very own runway show.

From October 5 through December 31, 2007 the National Constitution Center is hosting *First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image*. Admission to *First Ladies: Political Role*

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and Public Image is \$15 for adults, \$14 for seniors ages 65 and up, and \$9 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Admission to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theater production "Freedom Rising", is included. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

First Ladies is based on one of the Smithsonian's most visited permanent exhibitions and contains artifacts from the rarely traveled first ladies collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, Behring Center. Organized by the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), *First Ladies* is made possible by A&E Network. Macy's is the local presenting sponsor and NBC 10 is the official media partner for the Center's showing of *First Ladies*.

Funding for the National Constitution Center's changing exhibits program has been made possible through a \$1 million grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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