

# NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER WELCOMES MILLIONTH VISITOR

Philadelphia, PA (October 13, 2004) – Fifteen months after opening to the public on July 4, 2003, the National Constitution Center welcomed its one millionth visitor and celebrated its position as one of the top tourist attractions in the country.

Since Grand Opening on Independence Day 2003, 1,000,000 total visitors have come through the doors of the National Constitution Center. Nearly 200,000 students from all over the region have toured the museum as part of their school curriculum, along with regional visitors, and tourists from across the country.

Upon the Center's opening at 9:30 a.m., the millionth visitor, Natanya Apfelbaum, 17, of Philadelphia's Germantown section, was greeted with applause, confetti, and a trumpet fanfare. The Central High School senior (who was meeting her classmates for a visit) was presented with flowers, balloons, a gift bag filled with merchandise from the Museum Store, and a complimentary one-year Membership to the National Constitution Center.

In addition to welcoming its millionth visitor, the Constitution Center is also celebrating a banner first 15 months of operation. In May 2004, the Center was ranked among the 50 Top-Rated U.S. Attractions in Zagat's *2004 U.S. Family Travel Guide* and has also taken its place as one of the nation's premier sites of conversation and debate. Additionally, more tickets to the National Constitution Center are sold at the Independence Visitor Center than any other attraction.

"The National Constitution Center has achieved extraordinary results since we opened, not only in terms of attendance, but in terms of visibility as well," said Richard Stengel, President and CEO of the Center. "The Center has captured the attention of the nation as both a remarkable

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## ADD ONE/MILLIONTH VISITOR

tourist attraction and an educational resource, as well as a place for discussion and debate, and even more importantly, as a place that awakens a passion for active citizenship. We are well on our way to becoming an icon of both Philadelphia and the entire country.”

From lectures and debates to book signings, dramatic presentations and musical performances, the Center hosted an array of local and nationally recognized politicians, writers and entertainers. Day after day, activities in the Grand Hall Lobby provided opportunities for families not only to explore American history but to enjoy working with crafts, face painting – even free ice cream! Nearly every evening, the facility was utilized by local and national organizations as a banquet hall or meeting place. And in just one year, the National Constitution Center has infused Philadelphia with a refreshing new dialogue about a document that unites every American citizen and that still stimulates vigorous national debate.

The Center’s commitment to educational programming that engages and inspires visitors was demonstrated by a variety of provocative programs and lectures. The “Constitutional Conversation” series, the “Great Debate” series, and the annual “John M. Templeton, Jr. Lecture on Economic Liberties and the Constitution” all touched in issues both enduring and contemporary. Series highlights included: *My Life* with former President Bill Clinton; *Same-Sex Marriage: Do We Need a Federal Marriage Amendment?* with Judge Robert Bork, Andrew Sullivan and Rep. Karla Drenner; *Who Were These Women?* a discussion about our Founding Mothers with Cokie Roberts; *The Constitution and the African American Experience: Exploring the Literature* with Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Lorene Cary; and *Will the Real Ben Franklin Please Stand Up?* led by Pulitzer prize-winning author Gordon Wood.

Other events have featured appearances and presentations by Sandra Day O’Connor, Tom Clancy and Gen. Anthony Zinni (Ret.), Lynne Cheney, Bob Schieffer, Gore Vidal, Sean Hannity, Jon Bon Jovi, Al Roker, Vanna White, George Stephanopoulos, Richard Epstein, Floyd Abrams, and John Podesta. The Center is also home to National Public Radio’s *Justice Talking*, an hour-long weekly program that engages listeners in timely debates on the current legal battles of the nation.

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## ADD TWO/MILLIONTH VISITOR

In addition to adult programming, the Center reached out to college and high school campuses throughout the year. The Army vs. Navy “Patriot Games” was held at the museum in December 2003, adding a constitutional trivia contest to the festivities surrounding the annual football game. High school students from as far away as Pittsburgh competed in the first annual “Constitution Bowl” at the Center in April. The winning team members from Upper Dublin High School in Fort Washington, PA, won scholarships from Comcast and the History Channel, who partnered with the museum for the event.

Every fifth grade class – more than 15,000 students – in the Philadelphia public school district, as well as some from other school districts in the region, visits the Center for free through the Young Scholars Program. Young Scholars is a two-year pilot program, administered through the Constitution Center’s Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which provides free class visits to the Center for fifth grade students and teachers, well as the inclusion of Center staff and experts in the development of new curriculum. The Honickman Foundation, located in Philadelphia, PA, is the lead sponsor of this program. All student groups who visit the Center also receive a Class Visit Activities Guide.

Even after the museum exhibits closed to the public in the evening, the National Constitution Center continued to draw attention - more than 300 facility rentals have occurred since its opening. The number of people who visited the center as part of a private event is not included in the million total visitors to date.

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER**

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 its relevance to Americans’ daily lives. Opened on July 3, 2003, 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 and debates, and as a home for visiting scholars. Also, serving as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional debate, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contains diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. The museum is open seven days a week, and admission is \$7 for adults and \$5 for seniors ages 62 and up, children ages 4-12, and military personnel. Group rates are also available. For more information, call 215.409.6600 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

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