

HISTORY LESSON 21ST CENTURY STYLE: VALLEY FORGE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK NOW OFFERING GUIDED CELL PHONE TOURS

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VALLEY FORGE, Pa., — Valley Forge National Historical Park is now using cell phone technology to bring the stories of this special place to life for all users. "We're using this technology to get our message out in a new way that's convenient and easy to use for almost everyone," said park superintendent, Mike Caldwell. "Since visitors use their own cell phones, there are no rental fees, no equipment to store, nothing to check in or out, so it's that much easier" he added.

Cell phone tours are part of the park's effort to reach out to recreational users connecting healthy living with national parks as resources for their "daily minimum outdoor recreation requirement." Almost everyone now carries a phone, since staying connected has become essential. The technology lets users get information when and where they want it. Valley Forge NHP is supported in this by a grant from Unilever/Lipton, a Proud Partner of America's National Parks.

Taking the cell phone tours is simple and free except for the cost of the user's cellular phone service minutes. Access is made by dialing 408-794-2820 and then entering the item number one wants to hear. Messages cover both historical and natural history facts, and include voices and events recalling the winter encampment of the Continental Army. Messages are 2-3 minutes and follow the existing Encampment Auto Tour of the park. Signs at 11 places in the park let users know that site-specific messages are available. A California based company, Guide by Cell, offers the service.

Who are some of the voices narrating prominent moments in Valley Forge's history? One is Thomas Fleming, noted author of *Washington's Secret War: The Hidden History of Valley Forge*, and many other works of fiction and non-fiction. "Fleming describes the opponents that Washington faced and the political alliances he formed to overcome them," said Barbara Pollarine, Deputy Superintendent for Valley Forge NHP. In addition to messages featuring historical facts, there are separate extensions that feature the natural resources in the area and why Valley Forge was chosen as the site for the famous winter encampment. "The goal of the tour is accessibility and diversity; to reach all visitors that use the park on a daily basis," explained Caldwell. The tour also includes messages spoken by park rangers, members of the Oneida Indian Nation, volunteers and interns. "Eventually we'd like to offer the tours in French and Spanish," added Pollarine.

Access to the Valley Forge Cell Phone Tour is available 24 hours a day by dialing 408-794-2820. Additional information can be obtained in the Welcome Center, located at the

intersection of Route 23 and North Gulph Road in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. For further information, please call 610-783-1077 or visit www.nps.gov/vafo

About Valley Forge National Historical Park Valley Forge National Historical Park educates present and future generations of Americans about one of the most defining events in our nation's history by preserving the natural and cultural resources that commemorate the encampment of the Continental Army at Valley Forge in 1777-78.