

For release: Immediate

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National Park to Celebrate Pivotal French Friendship

“Our New Best Friend: French Alliance Celebration 2011” set for May 7 at Valley Forge

King of Prussia, Pa.-- Thunderous musket and cannon fire echoed across Valley Forge in May of 1778, but instead of signaling vicious combat, it represented joyous celebration of a young America’s strategic and fruitful friendship with France.

To celebrate the 233rd anniversary of that pivotal alliance, representatives of and re-enactors from America’s oldest allies will gather at Valley Forge National Historical Park for family-friendly festivities on Saturday, May 7.

The fledgling nation’s first friends, the Oneida Indians, carried corn 300 miles to nourish General Washington’s hungry men at Valley Forge and fought in the battles of Oriskany and Saratoga. Members of the Oneida Indian Nation will encamp from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Muhlenberg Brigade area of the Park and, with Continental Army re-enactors, talk about their ancestors’ experiences at Valley Forge and the significance of the French Alliance to the war for independence.

Benjamin Franklin and other American diplomats negotiated the official alliance with France. During the first years of the war, France supplied the rebels with weapons, ammunition and other equipment, but the February 1778 signing of the “Treaty of Amity and Commerce” meant the weight of the French army and navy could be brought to bear against the British.

When this news reached the troops at Valley Forge in May 1778, some 10,000 cheering soldiers fired their muskets in a “feu de joie” (fire of joy). At 12:20 p.m. and 2:20 p.m. on Saturday Park rangers will quarter-mile walks from the Visitor Center to the Muhlenberg Brigade where this momentous toast to the alliance will be re-enacted at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. During the celebration, children can also create tri-corner hats and French flags inside the Visitor Center.

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The event is free and open to the public. For more information about *Our New Best Friend French Alliance Celebration 2011*, contact the Valley Forge National Historical Park Visitor Center at 610-783-1099 or visit www.nps.gov/vafo. For information on other area attractions and affordable hotel accommodations, visit www.valleyforge.org.

The Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau, Ltd. is a nonprofit, membership-based sales and marketing organization that aggressively promotes the Valley Forge area and Montgomery County as a convention site and leisure visitor destination by encouraging patronage of its 500-plus member hotels, restaurants, attractions and services. The Bureau's Web site, at www.valleyforge.org, serves visitors, meeting planners, tour operators and residents.

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