



NEWS RELEASE

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Engaging History at Valley Forge

What do teachers, students, scholars and award winning documentary filmmakers have in common this summer-making Valley Forge their headquarters for engaging with history. The park will be used as a living classroom through teacher institutes, local teachers working in the national Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program, a University of Pennsylvania McNeil Center for Early American Studies fellow his dissertation in the field of Revolutionary American history and students creating videos as part of their experience linked to the new Ken Burns PBS series on the national parks.

“History’s Mysteries Solved! Creative and Practical Strategies for the Classroom,” a one week teacher institute features behind the scenes looks at both Independence National Historical Park and Valley Forge National Historical Park. Sessions will open the doors to the stories behind the scenery through lectures by noted historians, tours of rich museum and archeology collections, workshops on innovative teaching strategies and visits with characters from the 18th century. The institutes take place in July and are fully subscribed. Teachers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey and other northeastern states earn continuing education credits for their participation. Two local teachers will be part of the National Park Service Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program which places teachers in parks to assist park rangers with reviewing and developing curriculum based education programs, giving public programs and assisting with teacher development. During the school year teachers bring their experience in the park back to the classroom by presenting in service training for their colleagues about using parks as part of their curriculum and delivering lessons for students drawing on their summer experience. Barbara Masters, fifth grade teacher in the Great Valley School District, and Mike Cruz, high school teacher in the Treddyfrin/Easttown School District, will spend the summer helping park staff better connect with the enormous school population in the region.

Students will also be working with park staff to generate their own content based on their views and interests in the park as part of a grant awarded to Valley Forge, Independence and Hopewell Furnace. The grant is designed to engage kids with the history and nature of their national parks. Grants are part of companion activities developed in advance of the airing of the Ken Burns series, “National Parks-America’s Best Idea,” which will be aired nationally on PBS this fall. The parks represent the shared nature, culture and history of the nation and are owned by the public. This grant engages our young visitors in making these places their own. Philip C. Meade of Harvard University studies hundreds of diaries and journals of Revolutionary War soldiers to trace “how exposure to wartime landscapes hardened regional, ethnic, and racial prejudices that soldiers brought to the war experience.” Mead will be the first Baky Fellow sponsored by the Friends of Valley Forge Park; he will work on finishing his dissertation while

assisting the park staff with projects and programming for the public. This offers the park an opportunity to work with fresh new scholarship to enliven the stories of the period for all of our visitors.

About Valley Forge National Historical Park

Valley Forge National Historical Park is a national icon of the American Revolution that serves as a place where visitors enjoy, understand, care for, and preserve America's history and natural heritage. The Park offers an engaging, complete educational and recreational experience, providing an important piece of the American story in a beautiful, historical, preserved landscape.

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