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For Immediate Release:

Volunteers Being Trained for New Exhibit and Visitor Center; Newcomer House at Antietam National Battlefield Opens Sep. 14th



New volunteers recently participated in familiarization tours of Washington, Frederick, and Carroll counties. Pictured at South Mountain State Battlefield are the volunteers gathered with NPS Volunteer Coordinators, State Park personnel and CVB/Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area assistant Charissa Beeler Stanton - second row third from right

(Hagerstown, MD) – Approximately forty volunteers are preparing for the thousands of visitors expected to stop by the new Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area Exhibit and Visitor Center this September. The Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau will host a grand opening for the new center on September 14th at 11:00 am. The center is located in the historic Newcomer house on the Antietam National Battlefield. Elected officials, community and business leaders from Washington, Frederick, and Carroll counties, National Park Service and Maryland State Parks personnel, members of the board of directors of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, and volunteers are expected to join in the official ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Newcomer House is a partnership between the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, the National Park Service's Antietam National Battlefield, and the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. The Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Antietam National Battlefield entered into a cooperative agreement to open the new exhibit and visitor center in the historic house.

The Newcomer House will serve as an information center for visitors traveling to the area. The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, one of eleven state certified heritage areas, encompasses historic sites in Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties.

Many of the volunteers have participated in familiarization tours to learn about Civil War battles at South Mountain State Battlefield, Antietam National Battlefield, and Monocacy National Battlefield. They have toured museums, historical societies, and historic sites throughout the area such as the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, the Carroll County Historical Society, the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and the Union Mills Homestead. Many of the volunteers are

interested in local history, particularly the Civil War, and also have a keen sense of the importance of the Battle of Antietam and other Maryland battles.

The theme of the center revolves around the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, which promotes stewardship of historic, cultural, and natural Civil War resources. Exhibits interpret the three themes of the heritage area -- In the Heat of Battle, On The Home Front, and Beyond the Battlefield -- and feature sites that convey those themes. The grand opening weekend will be September 17-19.

The South Mountain State Battlefield cannon crew will present a firing demonstration and interpretive program at the Newcomer House at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, September 18. "The Susquehanna Travellers" will perform Civil War music on Sunday, September 19 at 1:30 p.m. On-site parking is available and a free trolley service will provide transportation between the Pry House Field Hospital Museum, the Newcomer House, and the Sharpsburg Heritage Festival (heritage festival stop available Saturday only).

The grand opening event with the ribbon cutting ceremony on September 14th is the 148th Anniversary of the Battle of South Mountain (Sep. 14, 1862). September 17th is the 48th Anniversary of the Battle of Antietam (Sep. 17, 1862).

The National Park Service has provided exterior signage and is organizing volunteer staffing. The volunteers are being trained by the National Park Service to be able to greet visitors and give travel information for the battlefields and such other sites. The Convention and Visitors Bureau planned familiarization tours for the volunteers, organized the grand opening events, and spearheaded the exhibit planning.

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area was awarded a \$24,000 Maryland Heritage Areas Authority grant to match \$24,000 obtained earlier through the National Park Service's Challenge Cost Share Program. The money is being used for exhibit design and fabrication, furnishings and grand opening festivities.

The Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau is acting as the project's financial entity, coordinating procurement and purchasing. The CVB's Charissa Beeler Stanton has been coordinating the exhibit and interpretive design, and working with park service staff to prepare the house for its grand opening. The Newcomer House has been undergoing a lot of NPS improvements and touch-ups, and a new historic fence line has been built on the site, along with landscaping improvements, and painting.

The original Newcomer House was built in the 1780s by Christopher Orndorff, alongside the "Boonsboro Pike" near Middle Bridge across Antietam Creek outside Sharpsburg. Its property is referred to as the Newcomer Farm because Joshua Newcomer was the owner at the time of the 1862 Battle of Antietam. The farm and mill complex appear in several historic photographic images captured by Alexander Gardner just after the battle. The Newcomer Farm is within Antietam National Battlefield, on Maryland Route 34 east of Sharpsburg, Maryland. The new center will be open seven days a week from May - October, and weekends in April and November, from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

To learn more about Washington County, visit the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau website at www.marylandmemories.com. Washington County is part of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (www.heartofthecivilwar.org), and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (<http://hallowedground.org>). Washington County is also part of the Quad-State Tourism Coalition, a four-state tourism group along I-81. For more information, see: www.quadstate81.com.

The Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization whose mission is to help attract visitors to Hagerstown and Washington County. The

CVB helps to create vibrant growth for the local economy by promoting, developing, and expanding the local visitor industry.

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