



## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **VA Joins National Park Service by “Ringing Bells” on April 9 Commemorates the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the End of the Civil War**

**Sioux Falls, SD** – On April 9 at 2:15 p.m. CDT the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will partner with the National Park Service (NPS) to Ring the Bells Across the Land by asking VA facilities to sound their bells in commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War:

- **Who:** The Sioux Falls VA Medical Center will partner with the National Park Service to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Civil War.
- **What:** Will sound their bells four times, one bell ring for each year of the war, to help celebrate this commemoration.
- **When:** April 9, 2015, at 2:15 PM in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor chapel.

“We are honored to partner with the National Park Service in commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Civil War,” said VA Medical Center Director Darwin Goodspeed. “A majority of VA owes its existence to programs initiated because of the Civil War. Before the American Civil War, war veterans received very limited benefits – mostly just disability and survivors’ pensions and certificates to purchase a plot of land (which many just cashed out). The Civil War changed everything, as far as veterans’ benefits are concerned,” he said.

After the end of the Civil War the following benefits were provided to veterans:

- National Cemeteries were authorized in 1862.
- African Americans were authorized for enlistment and veterans benefits in 1862.
- Volunteer soldiers were given benefits and placed on equal footing with regular force veterans for the first time in history in 1862,

- Prosthetics for veterans were authorized for the first time.
- The first large scale Veterans' hospitals/homes--VHA's origins the National Homes--were authorized near the war's end in 1865.
- The Veteran's preference in hiring law and special pensions were enacted so veterans could pay for caretakers.

"We're joining in this national effort because we understand the significance of the sacrifices our Veterans make for our country," said Goodspeed. "The sounding of the bells four times, one ring for each year of the war, allows us to reflect for a moment on the numerous contributions our veterans have made in service to our country so that we may enjoy our freedoms," he added.

### **VA Partnership with National Park Service**

Since 2004 VA has partnered with the National Park Service on several historic related events. You can learn more about these partnerships at these links:

- [http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/veterans\\_affairs/History.html](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/veterans_affairs/History.html)
- [http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national\\_cemeteries/](http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/)

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