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Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism

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State, City unveil new Living History Program

Period re-enactors, musical and theatre performances bring streets of Springfield alive this summer

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Director Warren Ribley and Springfield Mayor Tim Davlin today announced details of a groundbreaking new tourism program in the works for summer 2010. “History Comes Alive – A Living History Program” will fill historic downtown Springfield and its Lincoln historic sites with period re-enactors, musical and theatre performances and even Mr. Lincoln himself, seven days a week, from June 15 through August 15. Special living history events will also be scheduled nightly Tuesday through Saturday during those eight weeks.

“Innovative programs like ‘History Comes Alive’ can help fuel the economy in tourist destinations like Springfield, and increase visitor traffic and spending,” said Director Ribley. “Best of all, it will give more visitors yet another reason to explore the quintessential American story of Abraham Lincoln in central Illinois.”

“‘History Comes Alive’ will enhance visitor experiences in Springfield during peak tourism season this summer, and will offer travelers a chance to immerse themselves in the Springfield Lincoln knew and loved,” said Mayor Davlin. “It is through the efforts of the many groups that have enthusiastically partnered that this program is possible. I’m hopeful ‘History Comes Alive’ will serve as a demonstration model for future living history programs in Springfield as well as throughout the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area.”

Visitors to Springfield will enjoy a wide array of free interpretive experiences at multiple Lincoln historic sites including the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Old State Capitol, Lincoln Herndon Law Office, and Vachel Lindsay Home as well as the

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and Illinois Executive Mansion. In addition, costumed interpreters will host a variety of programs throughout the downtown center area as well as Union Square Park in the Presidential Complex.

The Lincoln Home National Historic Site and Old State Capitol will have a series of events including costumed interpreters presenting daily living history vignettes, historical talks, live portrayals and demonstrations throughout the historic neighborhood and downtown square. Visitors won't want to miss "Mystic Chords of Memory," taking place each Saturday at Lincoln's Home and the Old State Capitol. The presentation begins with Mr. Lincoln giving his "Farewell Address" on the steps of Lincoln's Home. After the "Farewell Address", visitors will follow Lincoln in his horse-drawn carriage to the steps of the Old State Capitol where he will deliver parts of his first Inaugural Address.

The Old State Capitol will serve as the backdrop to several other events. Re-enactors will give daily presentations of "Mr. Lincoln's World" on the porticos of the Old State Capitol and at Lincoln Herndon Law Office. Visitors will enjoy ice cream socials during the warm summer evenings each Thursday on the lawn of the Old State Capitol. The Old State Capitol will also host special events including the Civil War Medical Encampment, June 11-13, and the *Once Upon a Prairie Story Festival* on July 10, a period storytelling festival geared to families held on the grounds of the Old State Capitol during the annual "Taste of Downtown."

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Union Square Park will be the site of a variety of performances Thursdays through Sundays in July. Theatrical performances, a period medicine show, vintage baseball and period musical performances are all part of the lineup. Most performances will take place in The Plaza at the museum, with some taking place at Union Square Park. Union Square Park will also host a costumed interpreter conducting street theater and storytelling performances daily at the Lincoln Bench.

Additional events include the Governor's Mansion Concert Series each Wednesday evening on the Executive Mansion grounds. Re-enactors will perform prior to the performances. "History Comes Alive" tours will include the "Little Turtle Stroller Tour" where interpreters will present morning stroller tours for families with young children. A "Looking for Lincoln" afternoon tour will be based on the Looking for Lincoln wayside

exhibits located throughout the downtown area. Visitors will also be encouraged to visit other Lincoln Legacy sites across the 42-county Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area.

The Vachel Lindsay Home will host "Little Turtle Story Hour" and "Poets in the Parlor" Tuesday through Saturday. "Little Turtle Story Hour" is specially designed for children and will be held each morning. A poetry reading will be presented at the home each afternoon geared toward older audiences. A favorite from the Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration, the Lincoln Troubadours will present street theater several times daily at various locations throughout downtown. And of course, Abraham Lincoln will be appearing several hours per day throughout all of the Lincoln sites and the downtown area.

The Office of Tourism at the Illinois DCEO, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA), the National Park Service, the Looking for Lincoln National Heritage Project and the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau started planning for the program late last year. "History Comes Alive" will build on the momentum created by the Lincoln Bicentennial with hopes that living history programming will ultimately be sustainable and expand throughout the 42-county Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area in Illinois.

"History Comes Alive" is a precursor to events leading up to Civil War Sesquicentennial in 2011, including a "Team of Rivals" major exhibit which opens at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in October. A complete list of events will soon be available on the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau website, www.visit-springfieldillinois.com.

"History Comes Alive" is being made possible through a tourism grant from the Office of Tourism at Illinois DCEO. The "History Comes Alive" project is being administered through the Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition. The grant funds for this project will be used as match to leverage additional federal funds for future programs within the Lincoln National Heritage Area.

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The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents.