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# **Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library And Museum Welcomes Five Millionth Visitor**

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SPRINGFIELD – The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum welcomed its five millionth visitor with gifts, music and an appearance by Lincoln himself, just days after the museum reopened to the public.

Visitor No. 5,000,000 was Regina Padgett of Orlando, Fla. She received a family membership in the presidential library's foundation and \$150 worth of gifts from the museum store and the Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Gov. JB Pritzker congratulated the presidential library and museum on reaching the milestone.

"I am one of the millions who have gained a greater appreciation of President Lincoln by visiting this wonderful institution," the governor said. "Lincoln offers all Americans an example of wisdom and decency, and we are fortunate to have the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum preserving his legacy for future generations."

The museum opened April 19, 2005. Reaching five million visitors in 15 years is a testament to Abraham Lincoln's impact on the world. So is the fact that people are eager to visit after the museum's three-month closure during the coronavirus pandemic.

Before the museum opened, estimates suggested total attendance after 15 years would be roughly 3.6 million. Actual attendance is nearly 40 percent above that mark. Visitors from every state and nearly every nation on earth have toured the museum.

"The public has embraced the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum to a degree that no one expected," said Ray LaHood, chairman of the presidential library's Board of Trustees. "That's a tribute to great planning and design, to the hard work of our staff and, most of all, to the amazing story of Abraham Lincoln."

Padgett couldn't quite believe she was No. 5,000,000. "Is this a joke? Are you serious?" she said.

After being reassured it was real, she was delighted "You can't see my big smile under this mask," she said. "I'm still in shock. I don't even know what to think."

Padgett, a social worker, was traveling with four nieces and nephews: Christopher Padgett, 9; Taylor Creantor, 11; Dante Paige, 16, and DeShawn Jones, 20. She said they were thrilled to be part of the celebration. "I'm like the best aunt of all time!"

Padgett, who is African American, said it was important to bring her nieces and nephews to the museum now. "With the climate as it is, I thought it was fitting to come and have them be educated about who Abraham Lincoln was and what he did for our people," she said.

Melissa Coultas, the acting executive director, noted the ALPLM is planning a major celebration next year for the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution dedicated to the 16<sup>th</sup> president.

“Just as Lincoln had a remarkable ability to grow as a person and a leader, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum must always embrace change,” Coultas said. “That can mean adding new artifacts or exhibits, but it also means engaging all voices within the community and discussing how the nation can best live up to Lincoln’s legacy.”

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum uses a combination of rigorous scholarship and high-tech showmanship to immerse visitors in Lincoln’s life and times. The library holds an unparalleled collection of Lincoln books, documents, photographs, artifacts and art, as well as some 12 million items pertaining to all aspects of Illinois history.

For more information, visit [www.PresidentLincoln.illinois.gov](http://www.PresidentLincoln.illinois.gov). You can follow the ALPLM on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).