

BULL RUN OBSERVER™

Friday, June 17, 2011

WESTERN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY'S FAVORITE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER www.bullrunobserver.com

Vol. 12 No. 21 ONE DOLLAR



INSIDE

Class of 2011

has graduated and is now ready to meet the world ...see pages 7-9, 11-12, 14-19

Independence Day

arrives July 4...many activities in nearby areas ...see page 5.

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PLEASE TOUCH: New window on history at Ben Lomond



From left, Meghan Bowman, Scott Yates, Scot Bowman and Brandon Yates were among the many reenactors who set up camp at Ben Lomond for the May 21 grand reopening of the historic site in Manassas, which offers a "please touch" approach to many items on display at the Pringle House Hospital.

Stacy Shaw / the Bull Run Observer

By STACY SHAW and
 GRETCHEN L.H. O'BRIEN
 Observer staff

A two-day event celebrated the grand reopening of a building on the Ben Lomond Historic Site as the Pringle House Hospital. The weekend began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 21. Hundreds of people then toured the house and grounds, listening to presentations from costumed historians and military reenactors.

Rob Orrison, Ben Lomond site manager, said the idea behind expanding the offerings was to give people a place to go to "really understand what happened in the Civil War."

The estate, at 10321 Sudley Manor Dr. in Manassas, served as a makeshift field hospital for injured soldiers after the First Battle of Manassas in 1861. With this year's 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, Prince William County's Historical Preservation Division planners wanted to honor its legacy. The timing for the Ben Lomond reopening was ideal.

Orrison said the house, which served as a hospital for wounded Confederate soldiers, provides a close look into the daily life of the Pringles, a father and his two adult sons, who lived in the house at the time it was taken over to become a hospital. In addition, the tour of the Pringle House Hospital, as the structure is named now, offers an immersion experience, complete with blood on the wall, to give visitors insight into the war.

"There are plenty of places you can visit...and read about battles," Orrison said. However, the Pringle House Hospital on the Ben Lomond site lets people experience, learn about and even touch history, in a manner of speaking.

During the late-May celebration, Tim Via of Manassas brought his family to tour Ben Lomond. About 14 years ago, Via came to the site as a volunteer; he helped plant the rose garden.

"It's great to come up here after all this time and see they got

This dad is sold on the value of education

By KATHY SANSONE
 Observer staff

Milton "Milt" C. Johns wears many hats, including politician, attorney, teacher, administrator, husband and father. Since 2007, he has served in the elected position of chairman at large of the Prince William County School Board. In that position, Johns is responsible for 80,000 students and the second-largest school system in Virginia. He began serving on the school board in 2003 when he was elected Brentsville Magisterial District representative.

Johns is often recognized by parents of school-age children. "It sometimes takes 30 minutes just to pick up a loaf of bread at the grocery store; people know me," which is not a bad thing, he said,



Kathy Sansone / the Bull Run Observer

Milt Johns, chairman at large of the Prince William County School Board, is responsible for 80,000 students and the second-largest school system in Virginia. He is shown here with son Wyatt and wife Shellee. Daughter Caitlin is away at college.

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Get the feel of history: Try on the clothes, nibble hard-tack, handle toilet items

continued from page 1

the house done," Via said. "Before helping in the garden, I never knew about the Ben Lomond house, but when you think about the contribution to the First Battle of Manassas, it has huge historic relevance. It's cool that with all this happening, people will see this, and it will be added to what everyone already knows."

Via's daughter Stephanie, 13, appreciated the antique rose garden, which included more than 100 rare and 19th-century roses planted by the Prince William County Master Gardeners and local people who know their roses.

Her brother Danny, 10, was fascinated listening to Noah Briggs, a historian from Reston, talk about blood-letting during the Civil War era. Briggs portrayed Isaac Tanner, a surgeon of the Second Virginia Calvary. Briggs

brought Civil War-era medical instruments from his personal collection and gave his presentation in a room splattered with fake blood.

Briggs was one of the many costumed living historians who volunteered their time, sharing their expertise, engaging visitors in conversation, answering questions and even presenting "first-person" accounts in character.

Outside in the slave quarters, Emmanuel Dabney, 20, of Dinwiddie, portrayed an enslaved African American of the Civil War era, who may have lived and worked at Ben Lomond. Many visitors spoke highly of his presentation and noted that it was troubling to hear about the atrocities of slavery narrated in first person.

Melanie Collins, of Manassas, said she had been to Ben Lomond previously; however, "I've never been able to come to the slave quarters, and I found some things out I didn't know."

Orrison said the outer buildings, the slave quarters, smokehouse and dairy have always been on the property but will now be part of the tour. The smokehouse and dairy, he said, have been "totally restored to look as they did 150 years ago or so ... [and] now people can actually walk through them."

Approximately 850 people walked through the hospital and the other buildings on the grounds during the opening week, Orrison estimated. He was amazed by how many of those people were locals who had never before visited the site. He was encouraged by how visitors had positive things to say about the impact of the Pringle House Hospital tour.

Bill Backus, an historic interpreter with the county, said there will be a special event during the 150th Civil War commemoration on July 21, and special events will be held at other times during the year. Typically, visitors to the mu-

seum can get an interactive, hands-on experience by trying on period clothing, feeling the weight of a soldier's gear and eating hard-tack crackers.

Orrison noted how difficult it was to get people to hold and touch the items, which are all reproductions. Generally, he acknowledged, people are told not to touch things in a historic place or museum. Here, at the Ben Lomond Historic Site in the hospital building, people are encouraged to handle items, which may make them feel as if they're getting special treatment, Orrison said. However, that's going to be standard practice on the tours.

Backus said the new tour seems to be exciting people. "We're getting a lot of calls," and he expects a large number of visitors in July. He said some tour buses are already booked for upcoming months. He credited numerous people for making the

reopening a reality, including Orrison and Brendon Hanafin, chief of the Historic Preservation Division. Funding for the renovations came from grant money the division amassed, Backus explained.

Orrison said it was gratifying to see more than eight months of hard work come to fruition with the grand reopening.

The site is open every day except when closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. The tours cost \$5 per person, leave on the hour and last 45 minutes, according to Backus. Visit the grounds dawn to dusk. The site will be open through the end of October.

More information on the Ben Lomond Historic Site and the Pringle House Hospital is online at www.pwccgov.org, under visitors, education and historic sites or by phone: 703-367-7872.

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The Bull Run Observer is an independent, community service newspaper, published twice a month on Fridays by Randall Publishing Corporation, P.O. Box 1146, Manassas, VA 20108; telephone 703/369-5253; 24-hour FAX 703/369-5020. E-mail: editor@observernow.com. Production offices are located at 8803 Sudley Road, Ste. 201, Manassas, VA 20110. Production office phone 703/369-5253. Distributed by U.S. mail to 48,500+ households and post office boxes served by the Bristow, Broad Run, Catharpin, Gainesville, Haymarket, New Baltimore, Manassas and Nokesville post offices. Subscriptions available outside circulation area - \$55 for one year. Back issues are \$1.50 each plus postage, if available. Randi Deiotte Reid, Editor and Publisher. © Copyright 2011 Randall Publishing Corporation. All rights reserved.