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*Grant helps 'turn the mill around'

By MIKE FUCHS
Staff Writer

A group hoping to stabilize an 18th-century mill ravaged by arson received some much needed financial help from the federal government.

The Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board recently approved spending \$300,000 in federal grant money toward repairing Beverley Mill, which was set afire Oct. 22.

Ellen PercyMiller, executive director of the Turn the Mill Around Campaign, described the grant as badly needed at a time when organizers hope to use the money this summer to prevent the stone mill from collapsing.

"They just gave us a lifeline," PercyMiller said. "The important thing is to get the structure stabilized. We're dealing with potentially a disaster."

Structural engineers said steel

support rods required to stabilize the walls need to be replaced. Money will also be used to replace and repair some of the stones, rehabilitate the roofline, gables and chimney, she said.

PercyMiller said an additional \$125,000 will be needed to make repairs. The grant also requires 20 percent in matching funds be raised.

The group needs donations and volunteers to help with the project, she said.

Under the restoration plan, a mill store built in the 1930s that sits in front of the mill would be converted into an interpretive center. PercyMiller is also seeking volunteers to help identify mill relics, produce oral histories from long-time county residents and help out with landscaping.

The mill, built in 1742 by Jonathan Chapman, is located off Va.

See MILL, Page A3

Potomac News

Date 7-11-1999

Federal grant may save Beverley Mill

MILL From Page A1

55 on the near Prince William County's border with Fauquier County. At seven stories high on its western side, it is the tallest gristmill in the United States.

Beverley Mill is registered in the state and national registers of historic places.

Five generations of the Chapman family, followed by the Beverley family and other owners, milled corn and wheat from Beverley Mill. The mill provided supplies during seven American wars. During World Wars I and II, the mill operated 24-hours a day to provide grain to the troops.

In 1951, the mill went out of business due mainly in part to the advent of large companies centralizing flour production.

"There is seven wars' worth of history associated with Beverley Mill and some very early national history," Percy Miller said. "It was involved in the shaping of the frontier of Virginia, the development of the Shenandoah Valley and it tied that whole area in with the ports of Alexandria and Georgetown."

Investigators believe teenagers were responsible for October's arson, which gutted the mill's interior and was so hot it cracked some of the stones. The mill, boarded up for years, has been used by local youth as a hangout.

People interested in volunteering or making donations are asked to call Percy Miller at 753-3273.