

Buckland Society is recognized for its preservation and research efforts

By HEIDI M. BAUMSTARK
 Observer staff

Buckland Preservation Society received the Council of Virginia Archaeologists' 2008 Hoffman Award. The Society was honored for its overall preservation efforts at Buckland, particularly preserving and researching its archaeological sites.

The development encroaching around Buckland's edges make its historic attributes more important. Buckland's Historic District—more than 400 acres—was added to the National Register of Historic Places in March. The Town of Buckland has been on this register since 1988.

"There's a real high concentration of cultural and historical resources in one place and now it's protected," according to David Blake, Society board chairman.

The Hoffman award recognizes "those outside of the professional archaeological community who have made significant contributions to archaeological site preservation or historic preservation

within the Commonwealth," according to correspondence from Gail Johnson, chair of the Prince William County Architectural Review Board.

Blake received the Hoffman Award at an Oct. 11 ceremony at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville.

Dave Brown, an archaeologist with Data Investigations LLC, nominated Blake; Linda Wright, president of the society; and the Buckland Preservation Society for the award. Brown and Thane Harpole co-authored the National Register nomination for the Buckland Historic District.

Brown said the Society "was a wonderful candidate for the award since the Buckland Preservation Society not only made preserving archaeological sites and landscapes their top priority, but raised the bar for all preservation organizations by focusing on protection before excavation."

Johnson said the award is a "significant achievement for Prince William County's only historical district and for the



On behalf of the Buckland Preservation Society, David Blake, board chairman, accepted the Council of Virginia Archaeologists Hoffman Award for the society's efforts to preserve the historical and cultural features of Buckland. Esther White, COVA president, presented the award to Blake.

Courtesy photo

Buckland Preservation Society members whose unselfish work to preserve America's history continues in our midst."

Blake said he and other Society members are listening to "archaeologists, architectural historians, landscape architects, battlefield experts and landscape historians" for ideas on how best to continue to preserve the area.

Blake and Wright have met with expert archeologists such as Bill Kelso, who was in charge of the Jamestown rediscovery effort

and Nicolas Lucketti, archeologist for colonial Williamsburg.

Blake said the award program noted the Society's growth "into one of Virginia's hardest working and most innovative preservation organizations" that battles "to preserve one of America's oldest Macadam roads...."

Buckland, the program noted, is easily missed by drivers on U.S. 29. It is "a remarkable historic and cultural landscape that includes one of the highest concentrations of late 18th century buildings out-

side colonial Williamsburg," the program continued.

"The Buckland Preservation Society, through the hard work and tenacious determination of individuals such as David Blake and Linda Wright, is setting an example for all preservation groups under constant pressure from private developers, state and federal transportation departments and other demands, the Buckland Preservation Society has worked tirelessly to help study and preserve a small but crucial element of Virginia's past that is otherwise largely lost in the region."

"This is one of the last places in northern Virginia that we can glean information from an industrial 18th century village. It's kind of like a time capsule. To all these experts, it's like one of the last links from that period," Blake said.

The Society members have put in thousands of hours to create "volunteerism at its best," Johnson said. She is pleased the Society is getting the recognition it really deserves. She hopes other people in Prince William will look around to see what they can do to preserve our county's history.

More information on the Buckland Preservation Society can be found on its Web site, www.bucklandva.org.

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Bull Run Precinct—voting from the inside Battlefield students votes' not counted in mock election

By NANCY JOHNSON
Observer staff

It was dark when we arrived at 5 a.m. Eighteen election officials quietly started setting up the signs and the machines for the first election of the Bull Run Precinct to be held at Gainesville's Heritage Hunt community's clubhouse. My husband and I worked the polls there on Nov. 4.

All but 80 of the 3,059 voters in the Bull Run precinct live at Heritage Hunt. The community relations committee suggested the change, which had to be approved by Prince William County and the U.S. Department of Justice. Almost a third of the eligible voters had already cast absentee ballots; therefore, we hoped we would not be overwhelmed with voters.

When we opened the doors at 6 a.m., a long line of people snaked out of the ballroom and into the lobby. We were ready with opened registration poll books, voting machine activation cards and six voting machines. Two of the machines,

although tested the day before, malfunctioned and could not be used. The four remaining machines could not keep up with the crowd, and the lines grew longer throughout the morning.

The early birds wanted to vote before work or before their golf tee-time. This is a retirement community. Many waited patiently for up to an hour and a half before casting their ballots. The machines were a challenge for some, with temperamental screens causing minor delays in balloting.

Voters in this 10-year-old community in northern Prince William County are mainly white and older than 55. However, there were many minority voters, a number of elderly voters and some voters in wheelchairs who needed extra help. The many chairs in the polling place were well used as the morning wore on.

We were also surprised at the number of young people in their 20s living in the community with their parents who were voting in the pre-

cinct. There were even some grandchildren who came along to participate in Election Day.

An election technician worked on the two broken machines all morning. About noon, all six machines were working. The two extra machines helped clear out the lines. By 1 p.m., the lines were short, and balloting took only a few minutes. Many morning voters had left after seeing the long lines; they returned to cast their ballots easily in the afternoon. By 5 p.m. only a trickle of people were arriving. The last voter arrived only moments before the 7 p.m. deadline. When we closed the polls, we had recorded about a 90 percent turnout for this historic election.

The election officials had time for a quick pizza before spending the next hours closing down the election machines, tallying and verifying the results and filling out the voluminous paperwork that certifies the integrity of the election process. It was 10 p.m. before the final car left the parking lot.

By GRETCHEN L.H. O'BRIEN
Observer staff

Battlefield High School students were set to vote in the University of Virginia's Youth Leadership Initiative (YLI) mock election that is offered to students across the county. However, someone created a program that caused about 6,000 votes to appear as if they were from Battlefield, according to sources familiar with the information.

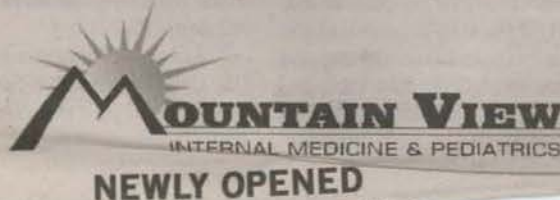
Meg Heubeck, YLI's director of instruction, said someone, possibly a student, redirected the YLI Web site, which registered a drastic jump in voting over a weekend period. "We checked into it," she said, and discovered "someone had rigged a system to cast votes" automatically. However, all those votes were blank so that the person who attempted to alter the results was unsuccessful.

Amy Ethridge-Conti, Battlefield's principal, said she was disappointed the school could not provide voting results to students. All students could vote over a period of two days, using a computer

code that signified the votes were from students and teachers at the Haymarket school, she said. Votes were cast not only for president but also for issues that voters felt were important. Ethridge-Conti said the school staff members are looking for ways to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Heubeck said she didn't know who had tried to alter the votes. She said there are often students who try to rig electronic elections, but those efforts are usually unsuccessful with UVA's YLI system, which logged more than 3.3 million votes from about 106 million students this year. YLI is run through UVA's Center for Politics. "We watch our site," Heubeck said, for the "evil geniuses" who try to outmaneuver the specialists.

Battlefield was one of 25 Prince William County schools that participated in online voting, according to Irene Cromer, school system supervisor of community relations. Cromer noted that whoever tried to alter the voting did not attempt it from a school computer but from a home computer.



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