



Tammy Scarton-The Journal Messenger

Jim Burgess prepares troop for battle

Volunteers-Battlefield Park Needs You!

By TAMMY SCARTON
JM Living Editor

Jim Burgess does the job of three men at the Manassas National Battlefield Park. He is volunteer coordinator, living history supervisor and park curator.

He is in charge of recruiting, orienting, training and placing all volunteers.

The Manassas National Battlefield Park Volunteer Program is divided into three sections—interpretive, resource management and maintenance.

The living history faction is concerned with living history. The volunteers hold firing demonstrations or reenact life at the Stone House, a Civil War hospital.

The resource management part works with the library, paper work and research tools.

The maintenance is in charge of the grounds, making sure the grass is mowed, trash picked up and fences mended.

There are about 35 volunteers on the roster. Volunteers usually set their own hours, but the interpretive group is required to put in at least 15 hours a month "because I need to set up the demonstrations and talks and tours. To set up a firing demonstration, I need to know how many bodies will be here," he said.

Volunteers can be of any age, but preferably are between 16 and 50 years old. "The living history volunteers must meet special requirements. They have to be at least military age. If they are under age, they are put in non-combatant roles, such as a drummer boy."

For safety reasons, "I also require them to be physically fit."

He also requires the soldiers to be neatly groomed. They must appear to be 1860's soldiers and not have their hair over their ears or collars.

"We also have military discipline. When I give orders, they must obey. If they didn't it wouldn't look good for the program."

The volunteer program runs throughout the year, although the living history aspect is more active in the summer and the resource management in the winter because of tourists.

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Weapons and uniforms are available for seven volunteers, but many wear their own clothes. "Many supply their own uniforms and gear, because it fits better," he said. The park must supply the weapons because of regulations.

Many volunteers participate in reenactments in other parts of the country. "Reenactments are not permitted in the park. Regulations stipulate that people can not shot at each other, which means we couldn't have an authentic reenactment. If it's not authentic, then we don't want

it," he said.

The volunteers are equally divided into ages. Six of the 35 are females.

Each spring a program is held to acquaint volunteers with the park, Burgess said. "I give them a tour of the park, tell them its history and background and where they fit in and their purpose in life," he said.

Volunteers are encouraged to do research and learn as much as they can about the park.

When Burgess came the park three years ago, there were only 15 volunteers. "Volunteers help tremendously," said. "But it's a Catch-22 situation. We don't have enough people to supervise them."

"It's good experience," he said. "You get to meet and deal with people on all levels and you use skills you didn't know you had."

Henry Bourne, Robert Rutledge, Scott Treese, Ralph Powell and Ron Riley are five living history volunteers who participate in the firing demonstrations at the park.

"I enjoy the Civil War and it's a great way to meet people," Rutledge. "I can live with people asking me if those are real guns and if the uniforms are hot. I can live with the heat. I may fall flat on my face from time to time, but I enjoy it."

"I'm a Civil War buff," Bourne said. The slides tours and walks can bore some people, he said, "the firing demonstrations really gives them a feeling of that period."

Ron Riley said, "It's a way for adults to have fun and play with guns, legally."