

One-time OSS training facility will get new life

CCC building in park to become multipurpose

By ELISA A. GLUSHEFSKI
eglushefski@manassasjm.com

Down a potholed driveway in Prince William Forest Park sits a historical gem.

What was once a vital facility used for training Office of Strategic Services agents during World War II is being renovated for multi-purpose uses, said Ranger Christopher Derman.

Derman led seven people, including members of the Friends of Prince William Forest Park, northbound on Interstate 95 from the park's headquarters.

Peggy Loudin had a vague knowledge of the OSS, but never knew the park was used as a training ground.

"I'm trying to envision them jump roping and working out with medicine balls," the Vienna resident said.

Loudin said she considers the project even more viable, considering the historical connection. And like most people who support a project, said: "I think it is money well spent."

Ranger Christopher Shea, the project manager, estimated the cost of the renovation at \$350,000 and said he hopes to have it completed by spring next year. The National Parks Service is funding the renovation.

Located at Camp 4 off Va. 234, the 100-foot-

long, 40-foot-wide cabin will, for the first time, have heating and air conditioning, Shea said.

Most of the cabin will remain open space, with the exception of a kitchenette, two bathrooms and a small upstairs storage space.

Every change made to the structure, Shea said, first has to be approved by the park's cultural resource specialist, Judy Volonoski, and the National Park Service, he said.

That couldn't make Ranger Bob Hickman happier.

"The temptation with the [Civilian Conservation Corps] buildings is to modernize and cut corners," Hickman said. "Modernize this, upgrade here and upgrade there."

Local theater groups have already expressed interest in using the facility, and Shea expects plenty of wedding receptions.

An updated building surrounded by nature's best could very well attract a whole new audience to the park, which is what Kathy Wentworth-Drahosz would like to see happen.

Wentworth-Drahosz, president of Friends, considers the park to be the area's "best kept secret" and doesn't understand why there aren't more area patrons.

"People don't have to jump on the highways and get tangled in traffic," she said. "I'm hoping this will reintroduce the park to the community and show people what we have to offer."

Staff writer Elisa Glushefski can be reached at (703) 878-8062.

The Virginia Center for Allergy and Asthma, Inc.

Robert A Sikora M.D. FACAAl

2296 Opitz Blvd., Suite 401,
Woodbridge, VA 22191
(703) 670-3900

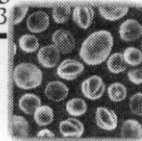
1320 Central Park Blvd., Suite 406
Fredericksburg, Va 22401
540-785-2433

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