

The Valley Banner

Vol. XXXIX No. 48 12 Pages

Elkton, Virginia, Thursday, August 4, 2005

540-298-9444 25 Cents

Pastors question medieval festival

By TED HAYES
Valley Banner Staff Writer

SHENANDOAH — The second running of the Big Gem Medieval and Renaissance Faire, officially dubbed the "Fairies of the GEM Fantasy Faire," drew a big crowd last weekend — as well as a little criticism the week before.

Fairgoers witnessed a poetry Wooting Contest, Musical Chairs, pony rides, a Queen's Tea with the Fairy Queen (Mia Watts), Gypsy Dancers, and archery, among many other events. Children dressed with fairy wings dotted the park side. Booths included a dozen vendors with a wide assortment of goods for sale, from small dragon statuettes to five-foot long, edged broad swords, and an assortment of items which vendor "Mys

See **FESTIVAL**, page 5



Ted Hayes / TVB

Scott McDonald of Woodbridge, dressed as "The Bugler Fly," was one of the participants at a recent medieval faire at Shenandoah's Big Gem Park.

Festival

Continued from page 1
tic Moon" advertised as "fine Celtic and medieval ware."

Chris and Mia Pugh of West Augusta, owners of the event's main contractor, Medieval Phantasies Company, were on hand. Pugh, in medieval dress, played Sir Blackwolf, and his wife, similarly attired, played Lady Dawn. Also present were several live alpacas, raised in Axton, Va. for their valuable wool; practice sword games for children, and a swinging vine, hanging from a tree limb, that enticed a lot of young customers.

Town Councilmen Dave Pierce and Mike Lowe helped with ticket collection and directing traffic.

Lowe is president of Citizens for Shenandoah, co-sponsoring organization along with the Town of Shenandoah.

Saturday evening was capped by a feast and the launching of lighted candles on the Big Gem Pond.

At last Tuesday's council meeting, the weekend fair drew spirited criticism. Bill Akers of Shenandoah and the Rev. Hudson Nuckols addressed the council and submitted a letter signed by them and by local pastors Leroy and Iris Hulvey and Ruth Rinker.

The letter questioned whether enough was known about the fair and its vendors to allow the event. Asked if he objected to holding the fair, Akers replied that, in viewing the company's Web site, he believed that two pages were "Celtic pagan" in content, that a poem on one of the pages was occult, and that people attending the fair would not be aware of these facts.

"The issue here is one of informed consent of fairgoers," he stated.

The council was not impressed.

"Make a complaint in writing," Councilman Charlie Clapper commented.

Akers replied that he had brought up the question, and the possibility that the fair had an occult element, to a town staff member who had helped coordinate the event, but this person disavowed any interest in the subject.

Councilwoman Rita Rudolph asked Akers if he were concerned that the sponsor was a cult.

"The sponsor denies religious affiliation in his material," Akers replied. "But he does not require this of his vendors."

Rev. Nuckols was asked by the council if he believed the occult was involved. Nuckols replied that he thought it might be.

"Let's use the park to stress our heritage — the smelting factory, the railroad, the native inhabitants," Nuckols concluded.

