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Shenandoah To Welcome Knights, Maidens, Fairies

Medieval Fest Takes Place At Big Gem

By DAWN SCHAUER
Daily News-Record

Those passing by Shenandoah's Big Gem this weekend may feel like they're in Camelot or Sherwood Forest instead of Page County.

Citizens for Shenandoah — a nonprofit community action group — is teaming up with Medieval Fantasies Company to sponsor "An Evening with the Fairies of the Gem," Saturday from 3 to 10 p.m. at Big Gem Park.

The Medieval Festival will include a variety of activities to create a "story book, fairy tale" atmosphere, according to Mike Lowe, president of Citi-

zens for Shenandoah.

"This is a family-oriented event, especially geared toward children," said Lowe.

Activities include a Fairy Queen nectar party, Medieval dance lessons, musical performances, pony rides and face painting, plus human chess and a wooing contest.

Organizers emphasize that the event is "playful and imaginary" and not associated with "black magic" or "Goth."

Medieval Fantasies approached Citizens for Shenandoah about the idea for the event after the company set up a display booth at Shenandoah's Memorial Day Festival and Parade, Lowe said.

"There are a series of entertaining events that will ultimately culminate with a dramatic surprise," said Dane

Buse, a Citizens for Shenandoah board member. Buse's sister, Mia Watts of Mount Crawford, is a public relations and advertising coordinator for Medieval Fantasies.

Medieval Fantasies hosts the Stone Tower Glenn Renaissance Faire at Natural Chimneys in Mount Solon.

Many 'Groupies'

Organizers are expecting a large crowd — about 500 — for the Shenandoah event. Many attendees are Medieval Fantasies Company "groupies."

"From what I've been told, there's a big following with this group," Lowe said. "I guess it's a hobby for a lot of people. Just like some people are into fishing or hot rod cars, people are into this."

"I guess it's the thrill of re-

living the past," Lowe added.

Citizens for Shenandoah hopes to make the festival at Big Gem an annual event.

Shenandoah's Big Gem is an ideal site for the Medieval event, said Lowe and Buse.

"It's enchanting already," Buse said.

"The park has a fairy-tale-like mystique with the trees and the honeysuckle vines draped around," Lowe said.

Movies like "Lord of the Rings" and "King Arthur" have helped spur people's fascination with Medieval festivals and Renaissance fairs, Buse said.

"When times are like this, with the country at war and the economy down, it doesn't hurt to have time set aside for a little fantasy and relaxation time," Buse said.

"It's also a good chance to walk around the park and see work that's been done this year," Buse added. "People will see stuff that you can't see just by driving by."

Audience participation is encouraged.

"Costumes are encouraged... Anything that will help you get involved in the feeling of a fairy tale," Buse said. "Kids will definitely have chances to participate, especially if they're in costume."

But Lowe and Buse advise wearing comfortable shoes for safety.

Novelty items will also be available for sale.

Weapons, coolers and alcohol are prohibited at the event. Lawn chairs are welcome. On site security will be provided by Medieval Fantasies.

Medieval Fest

WHAT: An Evening With the Fairies of the Gem

WHO: Citizens for Shenandoah and Medieval Fantasies Company are co-sponsoring a Medieval Festival

WHEN: Saturday, July 24, from 3 p.m. - 10 p.m.

WHERE: At Big Gem Park in Shenandoah, located off Fourth Street (U.S. 340)

ABOUT: Activities will include Medieval dance lessons, human chess or checkers, a wooing contest, musical performances, pony rides, face painting, a fairy tale trail and a dance under the stars. The event is \$8 for adults; \$4 for youth 7 to 16; 6 and under get in free. A meal will be served at 6 p.m. for a small fee. Costumes and lawn chairs are encouraged. Weapons and coolers are prohibited.