

Faire play

By ALICIA PETSKA



Mark and Lisa Starnes, of Deerfield, demonstrate the use of swords and shields Sunday at the Stone Tower Glenn Renaissance Faire at Natural Chimneys Park in Mount Solon. (NORMAN CARTER/Staff)

where they're going and what direction the sword will come from next. Since his accident, he also now wears heavy gloves when dueling.

Organized as a complement to the annual jousting events also taking place at Natural Chimneys this weekend, the Renaissance Faire was returning after a two-year hiatus. Set underneath the park's looming chimney rocks, the event brought lords and ladies together for two days of fantasy and grandeur, with activities including Shakespearean performances, archery and swordsmanship exhibits, and a game of human chess.

Among those taking in the sights Sunday were Becky and Steve Elkins, with their three young sons in tow.

Upon arriving, the boys made a beeline for the archery booth, each taking their turn at playing a modern-day Robin Hood.

"It was fun," Sam Elkins, 10, said afterward, adding, "It was very difficult, though."

For this Waynesboro family, the faire presented a chance not only for fun, but also for education.

"We're going to be studying the Renaissance and Middle Ages this coming year in school," explained Becky Elkins, who home schools her children. "So we thought we'd bring them out here."

Organizers Chris and Mia Pugh, of the West Augusta-based Medieval Fantasies Company, said the Mount Solon event allowed them to bring the pageantry of a faire to families who may not otherwise have been able to experience it.

"This is all about that, right there," said Chris Pugh, aka Sir Black Wolf, pointing to a family perusing the grounds. "It's family entertainment."

"It's also a culture," he added, making sure to assume his Renaissance-appropriate accent throughout. "It's a code of chivalry that's very important to us because of its values, which center on the importance of family and doing the right thing.

"This, truly, for us is a way of life."

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MOUNT SOLON - They slashed and they lunged. They thrust and then parried. They gave their opponent the occasional kick of the boot.

And they did it all without practicing a single step.

During the final day of this weekend's Stone Tower Glenn Renaissance Faire at Natural Chimneys Regional Park, "Steel Dragons," a duo made up of Rodney Hallam, of Greenville, and Joshua Shoenberger, of Waynesboro, gave a demonstration of live steel, clashing swords in an unrehearsed duel.

"It's a tremendous amount of force, even with a blunted sword," Hallam, who once almost lost a pinkie to swordplay, said of the sport.

To anticipate your opponent's moves, he explained, you have to stay observant, watching the shoulders and core to determine