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## Archaeologists to open Berry Site Saturday for annual Field Day

By Tammie Gercken Staff Writer Jun 23, 2017



Last year's Field Day drew a large crowd.

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The community will get to see firsthand the progress local archaeologists are making on the Berry Site in Morganton on Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., when the Exploring Joara Foundation holds its 18th annual Field Day. The event is free, though there will be a \$5 charge for parking.

The Berry Site is where archaeologists have discovered the 16th century Spanish settlement of Fort San Juan, believed to be the first inland European settlement in the U.S., dating back to 1567, exactly 450 years ago. The site also is the location of the ancient Native American town of Joara.

Visitors will get updates on the progress the field team from Warren Wilson College, who is in charge of the site, has made in the past year, according to a press release on the event. WWC archaeologists Dr. David Moore and Dr. Chris Rodning, two of the three lead researchers of the site, will make presentations at the Field Day.

"This is the best time of the entire year to visit the site because you have access to the people who have been leading this research for almost 30 years," said Marie Palacios, EJF's executive director. "It is one of the few days that the excavation is largely uncovered, and the archaeologists are actually standing in the middle of it as they host tours."

A special display will showcase new artifacts uncovered since the last Field Day. EJF Staff Archaeologist Melissa Timo described some of the exciting finds recently excavated.

"There are a number of cool things they've found this summer, which includes Spanish pottery, a carved stone Native American tobacco pipe and Native American ceramics," Timo said. "There will be some replica ceramics so you can see what the whole pot (would look like)."

Living-history re-enactors will give demonstrations in period skills such as blacksmithing and Catawba Indian crafts. Timo said members of the Catawba Nation will make presentations about different aspects of their culture.

The event, described by EJF as family-friendly, will engage children through a passport program. The first 99 children who attend will be given passports, which they can take to different locations at the field day to ask demonstrators and exhibitors questions about what they're doing to earn stamps for the passport. If children collect all the stamps available, they get a stone arrowhead necklace as a prize.

"The passport is a way to get kids active in seeing all of our different exhibits," Timo said. "Archeology is a really good thing for kids to get involved in, because it is a unique way of approaching the STEM — Science, Technology, Engineering and Math — fields. It's a great way of mixing lots of different interests that kids have, (such as) being in the ground like a paleontologist and looking at remains like a biologist.

"Also learning about local history is important, because this is such an important story for Burke County. It's a new way (for kids) to think about culture and interactions between different groups of people and how that might apply to interactions they have with people today."

Moore recently reflected on how the Field Day event has grown over the years.

"It began informally with two tables in the middle of the field," Moore said. "I was there with a few crew members to talk to anybody who came by. "It's grown since then. We've had as many as a thousand people. We kind of create a museum for a day around the excavation and let the public come in and show them as much as we can about what's happening and what we've learned at the site."

EJF will commemorate the 450th anniversary of the settlement later this summer with a Spanish Colonial Trail Festival, which will take place Aug. 4-5 at Catawba Meadows Park. The event will include a reenactment of Spanish explorer Juan Pardo meeting Native Americans at Joara.

To learn more about the Berry Site or the Field Day, contact EJJ at 828-439-2463 or visit [www.exploringjoara.org](http://www.exploringjoara.org).

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