

The art of questing reaches the island shores

By Michaela Kennedy

How many Jamestowners know the historical name of the island was Quinungate? Or know World War II German prisoners of war built the two stone posts near the guard building at Fort Getty? An island historical hunt, helping to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the European settlement of Jamestown, reveals more secrets than even most old-timers are aware.

Scavenger hunt enthusiasts polished their sneakers and blew up bicycle tires in anticipation of the local quest last weekend. Two days were dedicated to the hunt, which posed 21 questions about the island to the treasure hunters. Successful

contenders handed in completed forms to the community center, and awaited the prizes scheduled to be awarded at the Sunday evening concert at East Ferry.

Unfortunately, winners of the scavenger hunt were mostly visitors headed back to out-of-state homes, and missed their recognition of glory. Nevertheless, everyone involved, including the organizers, agreed they "learned a real lot."

Summer visitors Mike and Phyllis Suber, from Princeton, N.J., started the hunt by bicycle "as soon as we were able to get the forms," according to Mike. They rode out to Fort Getty to find information about the POW posts and the Kit Wright

Nature Trail. They rode up the hill to Battery Lane for clues on its history. Then the cyclers headed out to Beavertail Lighthouse Museum to search out the Fresnel lens, the beehive of glass from the 1800s that lit the way for sailors for years.

The Subers were pleased with the adventure and found it to be well organized. They had not participated in a scavenger hunt since they were children, and found fresh fun in the effort. "We learned a lot of little details," said Phyllis. "The hints were a big help." She added an extra guess, "We must have ridden 20 miles or more."

Local resident Harry Mielde entertained a houseful of relatives from Massachusetts, Ohio, California and last week. Young cousins, from the age 6 to 20, teamed up for the island adventure. Their vacation just happened to coincide with the

celebration week, and the spirited clan was excited to participate in the fun game. Sally Patton, 16, and from Ohio, noted, "There were a number of places I hadn't been to before," despite visits here every summer. Her favorite part of the quest was finding Battery Park and learning about the Daughters of the American Revolution.

A half dozen extended family members walked downtown together gathering clues, then carpooled out to Beavertail and other more remote spots in search of historical hints. Patton, who recently got her driver's license, chauffeured the group.

The idea for a scavenger hunt came from Teen Coordinator Melissa Minto, who always wanted to plan such an event for the island. "Questing is big all around the world," Minto said. "I wanted

to bring a historical aspect into it." Teen Michael Smith joined Melissa in concept development.

The teen center committee approached the Jamestown Historical Society and Rolling Agenda, a volunteer community coalition working to create a network of safe bike paths on the island. The two groups joined creative forces with the teen center. Historical society leaders Rosemary Enright and Sue Maden researched and wrote the program. Rolling Agenda's Carol Nelson-Lee designed the layout for the quest book. Photos used in the book were borrowed from both groups, as well as the Conanicut Land Trust.

Teachers have already asked if left-over books could be donated to the Jamestown schools. The activity will help children learn about island history, according to Minto.

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