
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW VISITORS' CENTER TO BE UNVEILED
AT SMITHVILLE PARK'S "VICTORIAN GAMES"

Summer-Long "Sneaker Sundays" Program Also Kicks Off This Sunday

When Historic Smithville Park plays host this Sunday, May 20, to the 2nd edition of *Victorian Games*, there will be a lot more than just old-time hopscotch and croquet on the program.

Freeholders will also officially mark the opening of a new Visitors' Center, and Freeholder Mary Ann O'Brian, an avid runner, will kick off "Sneaker Sundays," a summer-long program aimed at drawing residents of all ages on to the park trails for a casual Sunday stroll. The walk begins promptly at noon.

"This is a truly unique event, bringing together a variety of activities and live entertainment that all family members will enjoy," said Freeholder Director Bruce Garganio. "This is high entertainment for both regular park visitors and newcomers alike."

Hosted by the Burlington County Division of Parks in collaboration with the non-profit Friends of the Mansion at Smithville, the Victorian Games celebration runs from 12 noon until 4 PM, and also marks the beginning of the mansion's annual tour season. Parking and admission are free.

Early comers are welcomed to join with Freeholder O'Brien on a walking tour of some of Smithville's 3.5 miles of trails, a path that leads through the historical park, into the attractive wooded areas along the Rancocas Creek, and across Smithville Lake's floating bridge.

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This is just the first of O'Brien's scheduled walks on the Sneaker Sundays' schedule. Five other county parks will be featured over the course of the summer, the next being Boundary Creek Park in Moorestown on June 3.

"Walking is good healthy exercise for everyone," said O'Brien. "I encourage families to bring out their children and grandparents. And in the process, they will all discover a wonderful county park system that they might not have known existed."

The program includes a ribbon-cutting officially opening a restored house at 34 Maple Avenue – the oldest building on the park property -- as a Visitors Center, offering information about the park as well as restrooms and other amenities.

The houses at 8-9 Park Avenue, which once housed village workers, have also been restored with period furniture dating from 1865. Here, visitors can view a collection of quilts spanning three centuries.-

Of course, throughout the afternoon, kids of all ages will be invited to play a variety of games that Hezekiah B. Smith and his wife Agnes may have enjoyed while residing at Smithville in the late 1800s when Smith's model industrial town thrived, such as croquet, hopscotch, kick the can, hoops and sticks, jacks, jump rope and leap frog.

Burlington County Historian Joe Laufer will offer free tours of the Smithville Industrial Village from the Visitors' Center at 1:30 pm and 3 pm. The Smithville Conservancy will be selling commemorative bricks that will be placed in the pathway in front of the Visitors' Center.

Historic Smithville Park is located on Smithville Road, three quarters of a mile off Route 38 in Eastampton. There is no cost to participate in the Victorian games, but anyone interested in playing croquet should register for a time slot in advance.

To register, or for more information about the event, call the Division of Parks at (609) 265-5858.

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