

## Archaeologist invites public to come dig with him in the dirt



Archaeologists and students work at the Berry site field school in 2008.

By [Steve Welker](#) | The News Herald

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Morganton - Have you ever dreamed of uncovering history in the tradition of famous archaeologists like Howard Carter, who discovered King Tut, and Heinrich Schliemann, who found the ruins of Troy?

You can put your hands on history this summer during Warren Wilson College's Field School at the Berry site in Burke County. The 12-acre area north of Morganton holds the secrets of a 1,000-year-old Native American city named Joara and a 16th-century Spanish fort.

The Asheville-based college now is accepting applications to work on the site during June. And Western Piedmont Community College, starting on April 6, will register Burke County residents, teachers and students for a special two-week-long session at the site.

"This may be the opportunity you have always wanted: to explore archaeology," writes Dr. David Moore, a professor of anthropology and archaeology at Warren Wilson College and director of the Field School. "You will learn how to identify stone tools, pottery and other artifacts and your participation in the field school will help to reveal new evidence of the interactions between 16th-century Native Americans and Spanish invaders in western North Carolina."

People from outside Burke County pay \$300 per week to work at the Field School and to practice archaeology under Moore's tutelage.

By registering through Western Piedmont, however, people in Burke County can work at the site for two weeks in June at a fraction of the full price.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Mary Charlotte Safford, dean of humanities and sciences. She said Western Piedmont is the only community college in North

Carolina and one of the few in the nation that offers the chance to work on an archaeological dig.

WPCC students can enroll in Humanities 120 for college credit. The Field School course costs \$131.75.

Teachers can earn continuing-education units by enrolling through the WPCC Continuing Education Department. That costs only \$60.

Other Burke County residents also can enroll through Continuing Education for \$60.

All will work at the site from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. weekdays, June 15-26. They also will have an orientation session June 11.

Safford said Moore makes the special local rates available because of the support the project has received from Burke County's people (including a small grant from WPCC) and to make the Field School more affordable for students and low-income people here. The Field School operates from June 1 to 26. This year it will concentrate on excavating and mapping the area around a single building within a one-acre space where 16th-century Spanish artifacts and the remains of five burned buildings have been found. Moore believes the structures are the remains of Fort San Juan, the earliest (1567) European settlement in the U.S. interior.

No previous archaeological experience is necessary, but everyone should be prepared to literally get their hands dirty.

"Working on an archaeology site is a unique experience. It is educational and exciting," Moore writes. "However, we urge all participants to be aware that working conditions are variable. 'Excavation Methods' is taught outside (unless lab work is scheduled on rain days) and we recommend that participants wear appropriate work clothes. We also recommend hats to protect against sun exposure. Participants may bring lunches and snacks to the site (there is always water on site; you are welcome to bring any other non-alcoholic beverages). All equipment and supplies are provided."

Housing is not provided.

The dig is 12 miles north of Morganton on Upper Creek.

Moore has worked at the Berry site (named for the property owners) off and on since 1986 and every year for the past eight. He also has directed numerous field schools since 1978 in western North Carolina. He was the N.C. Office of State Archaeology's Western Office archaeologist for 18 years before becoming a full-time faculty member at Warren Wilson College. His latest book is "Catawba Valley Mississippian: Ceramics, Chronology, and Catawba Indians."

Western Piedmont's Mark Pellatt at 448-3543 and Eddie McGimsey at 448-6719 can provide more information about the curriculum course and continuing education, respectively. Also, Moore can be contacted at Warren Wilson College outside Asheville. His telephone number is (828) 771-2013 and his e-mail address is [dmoore@warren-wilson.edu](mailto:dmoore@warren-wilson.edu).

On the Web: Images and historical information about the Berry site are at [www.warren-wilson.edu/~arch/](http://www.warren-wilson.edu/~arch/).

<http://www2.morganton.com/content/2009/mar/29/archaeologist-invites-public-come-dig-him-dirt/>