

# Hundreds hike, enjoy cherry pie

Steve Ferris Eagle Staff Writer

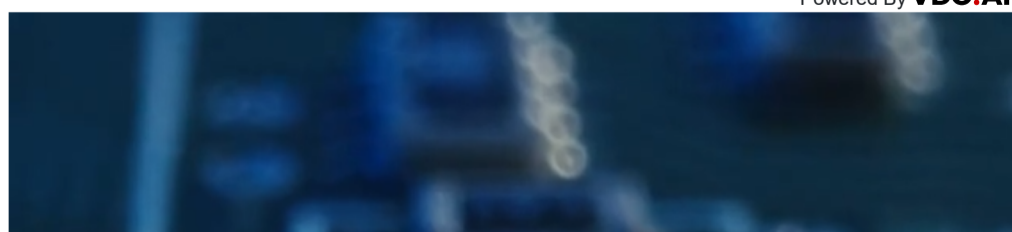
© February 24, 2024 Last Updated: February 26, 2024 10:08 AM Local News



Jack O'Brien portrays an 18th-century woodsman Saturday during the history walk at Jennings Environmental Education Center. The walk was part of the George Washington Cherry Pike Hike, which is held annually to celebrate Washington's birthday. O'Brien demonstrated the shot that was fired at Washington by a Native American accompanying Christopher Gist and him to Virginia. Morgan Phillips/Butler Eagle

BRADY TWP — Dozens of people enjoyed a slice of cherry pie and history along with a hike on a brisk winter day Saturday at Jennings Environmental Education Center.

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The George Washington Cherry Pie Hike, held every year for more than 20 years, is the Butler Chapter of the North Country Trail Association's biggest event. Short "history hikes" to the park's historical features were added this year to commemorate George Washington's birthday, which was Feb. 22.

"This is our biggest event every year," said Jan Genaway, chapter president.

The chapter partners with Jennings, the Harmony Museum and North Country Brew Pub of Slippery Rock, which donated the pies, to put on the event.

About 50 people participated in a 7-mile hike from the Route 528 bridge in Moraine State Park to Jennings, where a shuttle was waiting to drive them back to their vehicles, while groups of 10 to 25 went on shorter nature and history hikes.

Beth Dutton, a history buff from Pittsburgh who led one of the history hikes, said she has been coming to Jennings, Moraine and McConnells Mill State Park for hikes for 10 years.

"This is a great getaway for Pittsburghers," Dutton said.

Hikers and non-hikers alike could come indoors for a slice of pie, a display of Native American and Colonial artifacts and other attractions.

The \$3 donation asked for a piece of pie goes toward the chapter's maintenance of the 54 miles of the North Country Trail that runs through the county, Genaway said. Maintaining pedestrian bridges, repairing water damage, painting trail markers, cutting grass and removing fallen trees keeps the chapter's volunteer members busy, she said.

In addition, the chapter has "trail adopters" who regularly hike the sections of the trail they adopt and report fallen trees and other maintenance issues. The chapter has more than 100 individual and family members.

The hike used trails that follow the path of Route 528, which was built on an old Native American trail that George Washington used in his 1753 trip between Virginia and Fort Le Boeuf in Erie County.

"It was on high ground. The surrounding area was swamp," said Dave Adams, past president of the chapter.

In 2003, the first cherry pie hike was held to celebrate the 250th anniversary of Washington's mission, said Rodney Gasch, past president of the Harmony Museum.

"It turned into an event with hikes for various interests. People come out and learn about the history of the park," Gasch said.

The Moraine McConnells Mill and Jennings Commission, 3MJC, had a display promoting the volunteer organization's efforts to support the three state parks and its annual "Celebrate the Bloom" event on July 27 at Jennings.



Cynda Sites, dressed up as period character from the Revolutionary period, grabs a piece of cherry pie during the Jennings Environmental Education Center's hiking event to celebrate George Washington's birthday on Saturday. Morgan Phillips/Butler Eagle (2/24/2024)



Jack O'Brien portrays a woodsman during the history walk at Jennings Environmental Education Center to celebrate George Washington's birthday on Saturday, Feb. 24. O'Brien demonstrated the shot that was fired at Washington. Morgan Phillips/Butler Eagle



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Beth Dutton, center, leads a group on a history walk on the Black Cherry Trail at Jennings Environmental Education to celebrate George Washington's birthday on Saturday. Morgan Phillips/Butler Eagle (2/24/2024)



Jim Strutz grabs a piece of cherry pie after taking a history walk at the Jennings Environmental Education Center to celebrate George Washington's Birthday on Saturday, Feb. 24. Morgan Phillips/Butler Eagle (2/24/2024)

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