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Published: September 05, 2009

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Archaeological site opens center

By **Julie n. Chang**

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The foundation will host an open house at the Carl and Linda Wall Center for Archaeological Research, 220 New St., on Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. to celebrate the completion of renovations.

The Exploring Joara Foundation supports the ongoing work at the Berry site, the purported location of Native American village Joara and Spanish explorer Juan Pardo's Fort San Juan. Findings at the site suggest the fort pre-dates the Lost Colony of Roanoke by 20 years.

The open house will include displays, interactive exhibits, light refreshments and door prizes. Senior archaeologist David Moore and students from Warren-Wilson College will be on hand to guide visitors through the excavation process and discuss the significance of artifacts.

Carl and Linda Wall donated the building to the foundation in 2008, and it was put to use as a dormitory this summer for students and participants in the annual field school.

Moore said in 2001 the current major project began at the site, although he has been working on the site since 1986. He expects the group to continue working at the site for at least 10 more years.

Linda Wall said her husband first suggested purchasing a property for the Exploring Joara Foundation to use as a dormitory and office space.

Wall, who has been a long-time volunteer at the site since 2001 and also serves on the board of directors, had mentioned the foundation's lack of housing for college students often enough to make an impression on her husband.

Wall said she majored in history in college, and is particularly interested in ancient history. She helped establish the program at Western Piedmont Community College that gives students and teachers who work at the site credits.

"I'm continually working with the foundation and I thoroughly enjoy it," Wall said. "I'm just real pleased at

how nice (the center) looks."

Moore said the building used to serve as the offices of the old Morganton furniture factory, so the layout was perfect for the foundation's needs.

The renovations created six bedrooms that sleep up to 23 people, offices and a laboratory, Moore said.

"(The laboratory) allows us to do anything we do in an archaeology lab," Moore said. "We can wash artifacts and catalogue, our two main activities."

Students and others pay to participate in the field school and will be housed at the center, Moore said. This summer, the dormitory was filled to capacity for seven weeks and housed a smaller number for four weeks.

Moore said the Wall Center will be used for programming during the year, but will not remain open to the public just yet.

"Our primary goal is to raise money to hire a local coordinator," Moore said. At that point, the Wall Center may be opened to the public year-round.

Donations to the Exploring Joara Foundation can be sent to PO Box 296, Morganton, NC 28680.

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