

For Immediate Release

May 2, 2016

Contact: Christina Arseneau

Niles History Center Director

carseneau@nilesmi.org

269-683-4700 ext. 4010

ALL THINGS FORT ST. JOSEPH - HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The Fort St. Joseph (FSJ) Archaeological Project is a collaboration between Western Michigan University (WMU) and the City of Niles, Michigan with support from the greater community. The FSJ Project offers a variety of opportunities for the public to get involved as a means of sharing knowledge about local archaeological investigations and the history of the City of Niles, MI.

Fort St. Joseph, founded in 1691, was an important French mission, trading post, and military garrison until it was abandoned in 1781. During its time, FSJ was controlled by four countries; France, Britain, Spain, and America, as well as multiple Native American Indian Tribes, including the Potawatomi. In 1998, Niles' Support the Fort Committee called on WMU's, Dr. Michael Nassaney, to conduct an investigation to locate Fort St. Joseph. Over the last 18 years, Dr. Nassaney and teams of WMU students have worked to uncover the history of Niles' Fort St. Joseph in conjunction with WMU's, Archaeological Field School, which is certified by the Register for Professional Archaeologists.

41ST ANNUAL WMU ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SCHOOL- The 2016 field school will take place from June 30 to August 19, 2016. In this program, graduate and undergraduate students discover history as they search for evidence of past activities at Fort St. Joseph. Students gain hands-on experience in proper archaeological techniques including excavation, site survey, wet screening, record keeping and mapping. WMU's Dr. Michael Nassaney states; "this collaborative archaeological research project provides the opportunity for intensive study and public outreach, as students and staff live in Niles and interact with the community."

SUMMER LECTURE SERIES- During the 2016 field season the public is invited to engage in several interactive and educational programs, focusing on this year's theme: **FLOWING THROUGH TIME: RIVERS IN HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**. This year's annual four-part lecture series, begins on Wednesday July 20, 2016 at 7 pm at the Niles District Library.

- **July 20-** *Bark Canoes and Dugouts: Early Transportation on West Michigan Rivers:* Kevin Finney, Executive Director, Jijak Foundation, Gun Lake Band of Potawatomi Indians
- **July 27-** *Native American and Euro-American Settlements of the St. Joseph River Valley:* Allison Hoock, M.A., Western Michigan University
- **August 3-** *"A Plentitude of All Things": Resources of la Riviere St. Joseph:* Terrance J. Martin, Curator Emeritus, Illinois State Museum
- **August 10-** *A History Runs Through It: Nine Millennia of Human Experience along the St. Johns River of Northeast Florida:* Kenneth E. Sassaman, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida

SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM- With options for many ages, the FSJ Summer Camp Programs allow the public to participate in excavations along with all aspects of the FSJ archaeological dig including: wet screening, artifacts analysis, and mapping among other fun and educational opportunities. To apply please visit www.nileshistorycenter.org

WMU and the City of Niles also offer several summer camp programs for youth and lifelong learners, alike. These camps provide an opportunity for the public to engage in history and search for evidence at the Fort St. Joseph archeology site. Led by WMU's Education Instructor Tim Bober, participants spend a week discovering the extensive history of FSJ and participating in onsite excavation with opportunities to wet screen, map, and analyze recovered artifacts.

An approved continuing education program, the FSJ Lifelong Learner Camps are able to offer applicable students three (3) WMU Graduate credits, nine (9) State Board Continuing Education Units (Michigan), credits for recertification (Illinois), and/or credits applicable toward the Professional Growth Plan (Indiana).

- **July 15-22** Lifelong Learners
- **July 25-30** Teachers and Graduate Students
- **August 1-5** Middle School Students Grades 6-9

2016 FSJ OPEN HOUSE- Join us **Saturday, August 6 & Sunday, August 7 10:00am – 4:00pm** at the corner of Fort and Bond Streets in Niles, MI for our Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project Annual Open House that is FREE and open to the public. People of all ages are invited to attend to:

- Meet WMU archaeologists working at the FSJ archaeological site
- Observe period demonstrations at the Living History Village
- Explore the active FSJ archaeological site
- Participate in children's activities and crafts
- View recently uncovered artifacts
- Listen to period music and participate in period dance
- Learn more about the importance of the St. Joseph River past and present

For more information please visit www.wmich.edu/fortstjoseph

###



WESTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY

