

Sifting through history



Jason DeProspero/The Dominion Post

Cindy Bee, Rachel DePriest and Nicole Buchman run the dirt from a test pit over a screen to see if there are any artifacts.

Educators search for Kerns Fort grave sites

The Dominion Post

Teams of schoolteachers from across the state spent Wednesday in a way that would have made Indiana Jones proud.

They spent the day at Kerns Fort — a pre-Revolutionary War fort built by Michael Kerns in the Greenmont area of South Park — searching for artifacts with the hopes of finding the whereabouts of unmarked graves known to be in the area.

“We are hoping to maybe uncover some of the missing graves that are associated with this fort,” said Pam Casto, an education specialist at the NASA IV & V facility in Fairmont. “We have records of at least 10 graves that occurred in the late 1700s to early 1800s, of people that were buried around or in this fort. But nobody knows where those graves are today. So we are using ground penetrating radar [to] look for them.”

The search was part of a week-long summer institute put on by NASA and Fairmont State University, along with Ohio Valley Archeology and the Morgantown History Museum.

“During this week, the teachers



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Pam Casto holds a Colonial-era clay pipe stem that was found while screening soil from a shovel test pit.

have been studying the electromagnetic spectrum, which is all the wavelengths that include visible light, but is so much more on either side; infrared, ultraviolet, microwaves and radio waves.” Casto said. “They have been studying how NASA uses those wavelengths to study objects in the universe like black holes and far-away galaxies. Also NASA uses them to look back at Earth to study vegetation; and archeology uses them to

locate things beneath the soil.”

The group spent the first two days studying how the radio waves, microwaves and ultraviolet waves are used to study space. On Wednesday, they were shown how the wavelengths were used to find artifacts from the 1772 fort.

The group found numerous pieces of old pottery and nails, along with a clay stem from a Colonial-era pipe.