

Archaeology group digs deep into park's past

By KATIE TAMMEN / Daily News

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Locals are invited to explore a familiar spot with a different kind of guide next month.

The Destination Archaeology Resource Center (DARC) and the Mary Esther Library are teaming up at 2 p.m. April 12 to share information about the ancient midden mound located in the Oak Tree Nature Park.

"Most people don't know much about the mound building culture," said Mike Thomin, who is the manager of DARC. "This area is actually pretty well preserved."



[View photos from the park.](#)

The free event will begin with a discussion at the library and wrap up with an hour-long walk around the park that once served as the garbage dump, or midden mound, for Native Americans living in the area.

"Even though it's trash, we can actually learn quite a bit from it," Thomin said.

The park was first excavated in the 1950s and they found pieces of projectile points and stone knives, a jasper bead and animal remains mixed in with the oyster shells and other shellfish they consumed.

They searched the site again in the early 1990s and the University of West Florida dug there in 2002 and determined the site was used between 4000 BC and the 1700s.

This will be the third event held in the area by DARC. It also had one in downtown Fort Walton Beach and another in Gulf Breeze that drew more than 300 people.

The Mary Esther event will be limited to 30 participants, so people will need to RSVP. All ages are welcome.

People who plan to take the hour-long hike should dress appropriately and bring water.

For more information or to reserve a spot, contact the Mary Esther Library at 243-5731.

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