

Escape back in time at Auburn Heights

For families seeking to escape today's rat race, a trip back in time to 1910 just might do the trick. And on the first weekend in June, they can do just that at Auburn Heights Preserve in Yorklyn, Del. On the afternoons of June 3-4, the grounds of this grand old Victorian mansion are the site of "Old-Fashioned Fun at Auburn Heights," a festival where kids from two to 102 can enjoy the pleasures of a simpler time.

"A trip to Auburn Heights makes a great family outing," said Bob Reilly, executive director of the non-profit Friends of Auburn Heights Preserve, sponsors of the event. "Of course, everybody loves riding the miniature steam-powered trains that chug around the estate. And riding our 1915 Stanley Steamer bus and our 1916 electric car is a big hit too. Most folks today don't realize that people drove electric cars way back before the first World War, so riding in ours is a brand-new experience. Most have never seen, much less actually ridden, a Stanley Steamer!"

The "Old-Fashioned Fun" theme

extends throughout the estate. In addition to riding the 1/8-size trains drawn by their coal-burning steam locomotives, kids of all ages can play on Auburn Heights' broad lawns where they'll enjoy games like their great-grandparents played a hundred years ago. At 2:30 each afternoon, they can even learn how to "fire up" a Stanley Steamer, a 20-minute process that people back then didn't mind when their only alternative was a horse.

"Little children have a ball with our newest locomotive, 'Little Toot,'" Reilly said. "It's a wooden locomotive just their size. They can climb all over it and even ring the bell and blow the whistle. It really gives them the chance to be a train engineer...they love it!"

Tickets for the June 3-4 event are \$10 for adults and \$7 for children ages 2-12 (under age 2 free). Gates open at 1:00 p.m., and the event winds up at 4:30 each day. More information is available by calling 302-239-2385 or visiting www.AuburnHeights.org on the web.

With its handsome 1897 mansion, 5/8-mile Auburn Valley Steam Rail-

road and Marshall Museum featuring Stanley Steamers and antique electric trains, the Auburn Heights estate is located on Delaware Route 62 in Yorklyn, about eight miles northwest of Wilmington, Delaware and five miles south of Kennett Square, Pa. The estate itself, along with 200 acres of surrounding open space, will become part of the Delaware State

Parks system in 2008. Opportunities for public visits before that time are quite limited. In addition to the June weekend, Swamin' darts at Auburn Heights are planned for August 18-19 and October 21-22 (house tours will be available to adults for an additional charge in October).

Courtesy photo

