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Fort McHenry to get a visit from the boss

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Over the years, Fort McHenry has been host to all kinds of visitors. Some are regulars (the Fort McHenry Guard), some are visitors (tourists who want to see the birthplace of the National Anthem), some are politicians (local, regional and national) and some are historical and brought to us courtesy of re-enactors (Francis Scott Key, soldiers from the War of 1812 and so forth. And then of course, there were the real McCoys — the soldiers of long ago who camped there, fought there and died there to make it the place it is today).



Fort McHenry is no stranger to ceremony, like this one for survivors of Pearl Harbor. (File Photo)

Thursday, however, will mark the first time the fort has hosted the director of the National Park Service. Jonathan B. Jarvis, the newly appointed head of NPS, will be in town for a full day, according to Vince Vaise, the fort's Chief of Historical Interpretation, and he's going to be spending that time at the fort.

“This is really big,” says Vaise. “Jon Jarvis is the person in charge of all the national parks. The purpose is to see how urban youth, and especially minority youth, engage in NPS sites. He will see one of our education programs (cannon-firings, flag presentations) and have a question and answer session with local kids.”

Throughout the day, the Fort McHenry Guard will be on hand, dressed in their 1812 uniforms, to answer questions and give demonstrations.

From 3 p.m.-5 p.m., Jarvis will have a teachers' workshop at Francis Scott Key Technology Magnet School (formerly FSK Elementary) at 1425 E. Fort Avenue.

In the evening, a “Town Hall” meeting will be held from 7 p.m.-9 p.m., also at the school. This is an open forum, according to Vaise, where residents and others can discuss what where anyone can come and discuss aspects of the park system — both in Fort McHenry and in other areas.

For example, he says, residents can discuss what they like about parks, what they’d like to see changed, and more.

According to Vaise, Jarvis believes “that the mission is to get people engaged and outside, visiting parks and having a sense of park ownership, since parks are for everyone.” (Jarvis, he adds, will also be meeting with elected officials to discuss youth outreach and connection to the NPS).

The Town Hall Meeting, held in the evening, is free and open to the public, and will be held at the school. Information the other festivities of the day can be obtained by calling 410-962-4290.

—by **Mary Helen Sprecher**
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