

# Hard hat tours to be offered during fall living history event, oktoberfest

*By Jack Giblin*

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Exciting expansion is happening at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Lately, visitors have noticed several areas of construction consisting of the extension of the parking lot, the erection of a new outdoor meeting area, and the tear down of the Civil War, “1861: The Union Dissolved,” exhibit to make way for “The Soldier Experience” installation.

Despite construction, the USAHEC continues operations and will begin to offer the unique experience of hard hat tours in the main exhibit gallery during demolition of the previous exhibit through installation of the new \$2.5 million exhibit. Behind the scenes tours are scheduled in association with the next two large events this fall. The first event is the WWII Living History Event: Training for the North African Campaign, September 28 – 30, 2012, and the second is Oktoberfest, October 13-14, 2012.

The sneak peek into the USAHEC’s upcoming exhibit is just a small part of the larger living history event at the end of September. Nearly seventy years ago, American troops and their British Allies landed in North Africa to capture the ports of Algiers, Oran, and Casablanca as part of Operation Torch. Initiated in November 1942, this expedition began General George Patton’s campaign across the African continent. The USAHEC’s annual three-day event will use a variety of activities and demonstrations to explore the challenges of training and the nature of warfare in World War II. Training for the North African Campaign will feature World War II re-enactors, lectures, a swing band performance, veteran meet and greets, a basic training camp and much more. Friday’s events are educationally focused with activities and demonstrations geared toward school groups. Students, teachers, families and the public will have the opportunity to rotate between different stations to learn more about uniforms, weapons, equipment and events from World War II re-enactors. Saturday and Sunday’s events will incorporate lectures, demonstrations, and a variety of other activities related to World War II.

Come experience this unique opportunity as the USAHEC’s professional staff provides insights into the exhibit’s creation and installation. “The Soldier Experience” features interactive stations and immersive displays highlighting some of the best Soldiers’ stories found in the USAHEC collection. The exhibit will showcase U.S. Army history from the Spanish-American War through current operations and

include all Army ranks from private to general giving voices to the past and making history come alive. In addition to the timeline of Army history, there will be a changing gallery at the end of the exhibit highlighting the years 1862 and 1863 in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. The new exhibit will open to the public starting November 9, 2012 with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

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