

Subject: Friends of Serpent Mound officially responds to Mary Annette Pember's article "Crazy Theories Threaten Serpent Mound, Demean Native Heritage." REQUEST TO POST (The hard copy version was called "The Crackpot Has Landed")  
Importance: High

Dear editors at Indian Country,

With all due respect to the award-winning journalist Mary Annette Pember, in reading her alarmist article on Indian Country, I was quite disappointed to see that she threw into one of her paragraphs a single line, "A local citizen's organization, 'Friends of Serpent Mound', coordinates a number of events popular among New Age followers such as spring equinox and summer solstice celebrations", as if the Friends of Serpent Mound had some sort of involvement with any of the vandalism damage caused by one such "new age" group profiled in her article "Crazy Theories Threaten Serpent Mound, Demean Native Heritage."

First of all, Ms. Pember did not interview any of the officers or board members of the Friends of Serpent Mound for her article, or provide an advance draft of her article to the organization for review prior to publication, which would have saved her from reporting incorrect facts. The Friends of Serpent Mound (FOSM), in its nine-year history as a volunteer-support organization for the protection of Serpent Mound, has never once "coordinated" or hosted a spring equinox event. Further, from the organization's inception, FOSM has given volunteer support for the Ohio Historical Society's annual Summer Solstice Celebration events, and only recently began coordinating and hosting those events when the Ohio Historical Society (OHS) turned over the management of Serpent Mound to a forest preserve organization, the Arc of Appalachia, a few years ago.

The reason for holding an annual Summer Solstice event at Serpent Mound is that archaeologists in the 1980's began to realize that incorporated into the design and layout of the earthwork, portions of Serpent Mound's walls align to the rising and the setting of the Sun on the Summer Solstice. There are also sections that point to the rising and setting of the Sun on the equinoxes, as well as the rising of the Sun on the Winter Solstice. Additional key astronomical alignments, uncovered by archaeologist William F. Romain, that are incorporated into Serpent Mound's design include many key points along the horizon for the rising and setting of the Moon throughout its 18+ year cycle. The design is quite brilliant, and shows that our Native ancestors over two thousand years ago (the latest estimated date for when Serpent Mound was constructed) were quite advanced. Many years ago OHS began holding Summer Solstice events as a fun way to educate the public about these interesting aspects of Serpent Mound, and as a nice way to enjoy a summer sunset in a natural park environment. While the event may also be popular with "new age" believers (quite a diverse group of beliefs and believers that is difficult to dump into a single classification, as this article barely begins to show), it is also quite popular with all kinds of other groups that make up the 'general public'. The FOSM does not discriminate against anyone for whatever their beliefs are – if they are interested in, and want to help preserve Serpent Mound for years to come, they are friends of ours!

Originally formed under the auspices of the OHS, FOSM is now an independently registered 501c3 organization. FOSM has volunteered tens of thousands of hours over the past nine years providing Serpent Mound with chaperone protection for all sorts of groups that have received permits and permissions from both the OHS and the Arc of Appalachia to hold events at Serpent Mound (FOSM has no authority to grant any such permissions to host events at Serpent Mound). The FOSM helped the OHS to host its slate of public events when they managed the site, and FOSM continues to host several of those events today, as well as volunteering as support help for archaeological projects at Serpent Mound, and advocating for the continued preservation of Serpent Mound, and the preservation of all other native-built mounds and earthwork sites across the USA.

We find it unfortunate that Ms. Pember saw fit to tar the reputation of the FOSM by lumping it in with the "new age" vandalism group, Unite the Collective; the notorious Pike County agitator and extremist activist, Geoffrey Sea; Ancient Aliens; and the like. In fact, FOSM was the first to discover and report vandalism to the Serpent Mound twice during the past three years, and members of FOSM helped the Adams County Sheriff's Department and OHS track down and locate several of the buried "orgone accumulators" in Serpent Mound. I, personally, declined an invitation to appear on Ancient Aliens as I vehemently disagree with the premise that Serpent Mound was built by anyone other than our Native ancestors. FOSM was also on hand to volunteer chaperone during the approved and permitted "Crystal Skull" event when a couple thousand people peacefully visited and conducted their event. No physical damage to the mounds or the park occurred at this event, and all attendees stayed on the asphalt pathways and followed all park rules (see attached photo), showing that not all so-called "new age" events leave a destructive wake.



Photo by Delsey Wilson, FOSM

The Friends of Serpent Mound absolutely welcomes all tribal input and perspectives of any tribe that would like to collaborate to help preserve Serpent Mound. One particular native perspective on the notion of what is sacred is presented by Ben Friday, Arahapo, in the chapter "Traditional Sacredness" in the book *Sacred Materials*: "Sacred Material long ago was always different and it was up to the person to decide what is sacred...we have to determine it ourselves."

For more information about the mission of the Friends of Serpent Mound, its schedule of activities and events, or to contact us please visit [www.serpentmound.org](http://www.serpentmound.org) or visit FOSM on Facebook.

Written by Jeffrey Wilson, Board Member of the Friends of Serpent Mound, approved by full Board.