Honors society will help beautify fort

By HOWARD BUCK
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This time, the books can wait.
About a hundred top-flight students will dirty their hands when they converge on Clark College this weekend.
The regional conference of the national honors society for two-year colleges, Phi Theta Kappa, will take on an earthy luster when it convenes on Vancouver on Friday through Sunday.
The smart guests will mingle and pass out awards. They’ll elect new officers, debate organizational changes and tend to business affairs.
But they’ll also roll up sleeves Saturday morning to help make historic Fort Vancouver a little better place.
Students will help spruce up the gardens, chop and stack wood, and tackle other chores. It’s evidence they’re well-rounded and community service-minded, a cornerstone of the society’s ideals.

"Phi Theta Kappa is founded on four hallmarks: scholarship, fellowship, leadership and service,” said Deena Bisig, Clark College communications professor and campus adviser for the honors chapter.
Twenty to 30 active chapter members (out of Clark’s 250-300 society members) are big on service, Bisig said.

In recent months they gave 171 Thanksgiving food baskets to fellow students, chipped salmon to enhance Washougal River nutrients and helped the Junior Achievement program, she said.

Taking time out to help the Vancouver community seemed natural, even if it’s a regional confer-
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e, Bisig said.

“If we were going to host it, we wanted to get (nearly) 200 hours of service done,” she said. “If we have 100 people on campus and the fort’s so near, that would be cool.”

The honors students hail from community and technical colleges in Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Montana and western Canada.

It’s the first time Clark has hosted the Phi Theta Kappa event, and it owes to Bisig’s work.

Bisig, who turns 30 today, was among 24 Phi Theta Kappa leaders selected nationwide in 2007 as a faculty scholar for the group’s annual institute, where top students hone leadership skills.

She won the prestigious Gen. George C. Marshall Public Leadership Award in 2007, and has earned several other local honors.

The students’ help is timely, said the fort’s top ranger.

“It’s great. This is extraordin-