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Those of Swiss heritage urged to explore roots

By Jeff Himler
Staff writer

http://pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/trib/newssummary/s_425122.html

Derry Township resident Evelyn Ruffing, a local history buff who has delved into her family's Swiss heritage, is encouraging others who share her ethnicity to do likewise.

Ruffing suggests that area residents who believe they have a Swiss connection begin their search at www.swissroots.org. The new website, which is scheduled to be up and running next month, is supported by several organizations which promote cultural, tourist and economic interaction between the U.S. and Switzerland.

In addition to genealogical search engines, the site will offer an event calendar and a wide range of information about the land of the high Alps and hole-riddled cheese.

For more information locally, contact Ruffing at 724-539-2171.

According to the website's fact sheet, more than one million Americans have Swiss roots, including popular actress Renee Zellweger. More than 5,000 American cities have Swiss names, while Pennsylvania is among the five U.S. states with the highest concentration of citizens with Swiss heritage.

Ruffing adds that many Swiss emigrants settled in western Pennsylvania. Prominent area folks with Swiss ties include such past figures as ketchup entrepreneur H.J. Heinz and steel industrialist Henry Clay Frick, as well as current Steelers star Ben Roethlisberger.

Jeff Himler can be reached at jhimler@tribweb.com or (724) 459-6100, ext. 13.