

# 'The Hobbit' travels to Westampton for a visit

By Gail T. Boatman  
Special to To Do

**D**uring the Middle Ages, troupes of actors traveled from place to place in England, staging plays that brought stories of heroes and villains to audiences. The San Diego, Calif.-based Traveling Lantern Company is today's version of those early players.

Friday, the company arrives at the Burlington County Library in Westampton to perform "The Hobbit," the J. R. R. Tolkien tale that began "The Lord of the

## IF YOU GO

The Hobbit with the  
Traveling Lantern Company

**Where:** Burlington County  
Library, 5 Pioneer Blvd.,  
Westampton

**When:** Friday at 7 p.m.

**Admission:** Free

**Information:** 609-267-9660,  
ext. 3036

Rings." The program, which begins at 7 p.m., is one of the library's series of Friday night events for families.

"It is the story of how Bilbo

Baggins, a hobbit, found the ring," said K. B. Mercer, an actor who with her husband, Doren Elias, also an actor, operates Traveling Lantern. "It's a prequel to 'The Lord of the Rings,'" Mercer said.

A two-person acting team from the company will bring to life a world peopled by the comfort-loving hobbits, elves, trolls, a wizard, a dragon, and of course, Gollum, a creature who lives in a dark, damp place.

"Our mission is to bring the theatrical experience to children, to excite their minds and tickle their imaginations," Mercer said.

The actors, Greg Lawson and Greg Tankersley, belong to one of

six Traveling Lantern teams that criss-cross the United States, carrying with them the magic of theater. They travel in vans and bring along their costumes, sets and props.

Their set, redesigned this year, is collapsible and can be set up and dismantled quickly and easily for the performance. Other teams travel throughout other parts of the country, including the Midwest, the Southwest and Texas.

Like the itinerant troupes in the Middle Ages, Traveling Lantern believes in involving audience members in the production. "They will boo the villain, warn of danger



Greg Tankersley (left) and Greg Lawson will perform in "The Hobbit" on Friday night at the Burlington County Library.

and even become characters," Mercer said, noting that the company has about 20 different productions in its repertoire.