

VMS Students Travel to Washington DC

Thirteen students from the Vernonia Middle School traveled to Washington, DC in April as part of the annual Close Up trip. The VMS students were accompanied on their trip by school district staff member Rachel Wilcoxon; the trip is organized each year by middle school social studies instructor Ashley Ward.



Back Row, Left to Right: Rylan Pond, Ty Smith, Lauren Ely, Rachel Wilcoxon, Cash Henson, Mckenzie Pickering, Levi Burton, Alyssa Murray. Front Row, Left to Right: Cloe Rylands, Sophia Wolf, Dakota Willard, Nolan Grant, Devon Bergren.

The five day/four night trip takes students to numerous historical memorials, museums and sights and includes daily educational workshops led by trained educators. Students attend programs with other students from around the country. The Vernonia students spent a day at Colonial Williamsburg and also were able to visit the Washington, DC Zoo.

Students and their families have to provide the approximately \$2,000 cost and most participate in fundraisers organized by the school or find ways to raise the funds on their own. One of the students, Levi Burton, has been mowing lawns to raise money for the trip, and another, Leigha Dolan, held regular bake sales.

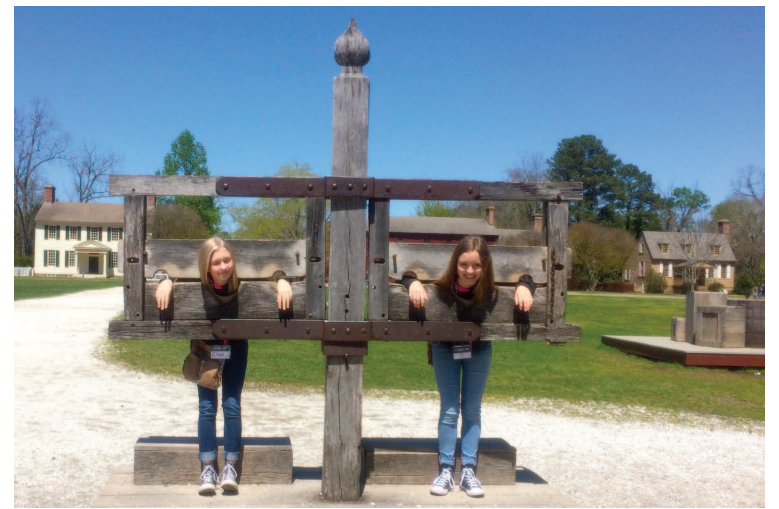
Following their return, students discussed their trip and talked about the highlights. Students said they

especially enjoyed visiting the memorials; Lauren Ely noted the beautiful fountains at the WWII Memorial. Cloe Rylands liked the setting at the Lincoln Memorial and Devon Bergren said he liked reading all the quotes on the walls there. Dakota Willard said she especially enjoyed the day at Williamsburg and liked the tour guide who explained what life was like in colonial times. She also said she enjoyed the authentic chicken pot pie lunch there. Ely noted that she enjoyed how their guides throughout the trip gave the students some time to explore the museums and sights on their own. Students also commented that they enjoyed meeting other students from around the county and especially enjoyed the Mock Congress where they discussed issues currently being debated by lawmakers. They also said they learned a lot about several presidents, including the birth of the human rights movement under Franklin D. Roosevelt. They also enjoyed their visit to the zoo and the chance to see the world famous panda bears.

Among the other highlights were their visits to the Arlington National Cemetery, Jefferson Memorial, Kennedy Memorial, MLK Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial, and the Washington Monument. Although they didn't actually visit the Washington Monument it was visible from almost everywhere in the city because of its tremendous height, which students said is over 500 feet tall.

Each day ended with a workshop where students discussed what they saw and learned including laws, the role of government, and citizens' rights.

The Vernonia students made a few other



Above: Cloe Rylands and Sophia Wolf in the stocks at Colonial Williamsburg. Below: The fountains at the World War II Memorial.



observations from their trip: The White House was much smaller than they expected; people in the east use umbrellas more, even when it's just raining a little bit, Washington, DC is much more ethnically diverse than cities they have visited on the west coast; and one student thought people in Washington were more friendly, although several other students disagreed.

The students packed so much activity into each day and were so exhausted at the end of the day that one student said one of the highlights of his trip was his bed at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda Hotel where the group stayed.



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