

“Look! Its’ George Washington! That’s our first President. “ “Is he still alive?”

In observation of President’s Day 2011, some 180 Kindergarten students of the Spotsylvania County elementary schools at Riverview and Cedar Forest were mesmerized by a real-life, historically accurate Revolutionary War British “Redcoat”. The message imparted to the students was that they were no different to George Washington, who also attended school at a very young age and learned the meaning of hard work. For the next five years, the same students will enjoy enrichments that are grade specific in History and Social Sciences, which focus on the different Standards of Learning (SOL), K through 5. The enrichments emphasize iconic people in history and their achievements. At the same time, the achievements are intertwined with corresponding civics lessons, which the students are challenged to practice at home and at school.

Dieter Stenger, the founder and president of the newly established non-profit, the Educational Enrichment for Young Patriots (EEYP), took a classic concept of parental participation in the classroom to a much higher level, after recognizing the benefits of bringing history to life in the classroom. EEYP is available to all Spotsylvania County elementary schools.

Stenger’s two daughters were both enrolled at Riverview and Cedar Forest Elementary schools. Stenger took a sincere interest in their education and visited them for lunches and played kick-ball with their classmates during recess. Eventually he coordinated closely with teachers and brought into the classroom short presentations, such as building small wooden ships used by Christopher Columbus, or firing a rocket outside after a review of Isaac Newton’s laws of motion. When his older daughter Izzy experienced difficulty distinguishing between Separatist and Puritan Pilgrims, he decided to dress up as Miles Standish, the first commander of the militia at the Plymouth colony, and provided a presentation addressing relative SOLs. The enthusiastic response from the students and teachers justified additional enrichments to include the Battle of Yorktown, the Battle of Gettysburg, and a Veteran’s Day observance.

As a non-profit organization, EEYP is eligible to receive charitable contributions from VA residents and businesses that are tax deductible under the law. EEYP received its tax-exempt recognition from the IRS last year. During the review of the application by the IRS, the agent conducting a phone interview with Stenger commented to him, “Boy, I wish they had this kind of a program when I was in school.” Stenger’s approach to a program that would help students better understand history, while at the same time building leadership skills, was solidified when he discovered the shocking number of benchmark testing failures in history throughout Spotsylvania County. At nearly 40 percent, the rate clearly indicated that students struggled to memorize various dates, places, and people. A key factor in the enrichment program is the focus on both men and women in history. The enrichment for Kindergarten, “Americana,” focused on the SOL for history, K.1, “Identifying examples of past events in legends, stories, and historical accounts of George Washington and Betsy Ross.” The wearing of period dress gains the attention of children in a mesmerizing manner from the moment they see the presenter. Additional tactile interaction then puts many parts of history into a more understandable and enjoyable perspective.

Stenger reports the long term goal of EEYP is to provide enrichments for every SOL in history and social sciences. This would allow teachers who recognize areas of study where students are struggling to contact EEYP and request specific enrichments that correspond to the SOL. In addition, other planned enrichments, which deal with the age of antiquity and the influence on our government and architecture, will include the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramses and Aphrodite, and mock elections by

Roman senators. The exploration of the New World will include Christopher Columbus, Queen Isabella of Spain, and John Smith and Pocahontas.

The services EEYP provides are at no cost to the schools, which formulates the fundamental foundation of the organization, and an important aspect for success within the current economy. Many established enrichment programs that were available to schools, such as field trips, have been cut. According to Stenger, "Bringing historical enrichments and displays into the schools within the current economic climate, free of charge, speaks volumes and has a tremendous impact on the kids. EEYP's partnership with other local historical venues will hopefully get students more interested in their communities for regional and national history." A Kindergarten teacher at Riverview stated, "The kids are so excited. This makes history come alive." Another teacher said, "The enrichments allow the information to be solidified that they have been working on for months."

The next scheduled enrichment will be for third graders on 27 May 2011 on the football field at Riverview Elementary School, in observance of Memorial Day. The SOL is "Civics 3.11 Explain the importance of the basic principles that form the foundation of a republican form of government by recognizing that Veterans Day and Memorial Day honor people who have served to protect the country's freedoms." Weather permitting; a variety of historical interpreters will have displays from the Civil War, World War I, and World War II. The local Armed Forces may also provide a static Blackhawk helicopter display, a presidential gun battery, and light armored vehicles. Details about EEYP can be found online at <http://www.educationalenrichment.org>.



**Picture/Caption 1: Dieter Stenger, the founder and president of the Educational Enrichment for Young Patriots, gets student attention by wearing a Revolutionary War British Redcoat uniform. Photo courtesy of EEYP.**



**Picture/Caption 2: Students enthusiastically participate. The enrichments are specifically geared to the Standards of Learning. Photo courtesy of EEYP.**



**Picture/Caption 3: Kirsten Slade, a Kindergarten teacher at Riverview Elementary School, and Dieter Stenger, poses together after the enrichment. Photo courtesy of EEYP.**