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Sixth-graders making history at Monticello

THEY'RE certainly the youngest documentary filmmakers ever to shoot at Monticello.

Sixth-graders from Albemarle County's Sutherland Middle School are in the process of producing original mini-documentaries at Monticello in a groundbreaking service-learning project sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership.

This initiative—*Of the Student, By the Student, For the Student*—will result in two-minute productions known as “vodcasts” that will present the students' perspectives on Jefferson, Monticello, and the young United States based on their experiences at Monticello and their review of primary source materials.

All eight sixth-grade English classes at Sutherland are participating in the project, and in turn they are collaborating with students in other classes, such as science, math, art, band, and technology. The students have selected the subjects of their productions and are working as writers, editors, photographers, choreographers, set and costume designers, videographers, public relations personnel, and even accountants in putting together their mini-documentaries.

This project has been made possible through funding by the Arundel Family Foundation.

“We all experience life differently, and the student viewpoint is both

special and unique,” said Cate Magennis Wyatt, president of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership. “Students relate best to other students—their peers. So why not take a look at history through their lens to focus on Jefferson and the people of Monticello to bring them to life for young people around the world to appreciate?”

The project was introduced at Sutherland Middle School on Feb. 24 with an event that featured singer and storyteller Calvin Earl. The students made their initial on-site visits to Monticello during the first week of March and returned for “production days” in April.

The students' finished productions will be unveiled in June at the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership's annual meeting in Charlottesville. The students' movies also will be used as interpretive material by both Monticello and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, and be posted on YouTube, so students of all ages can view them.

“Today's young people are connected to a high-tech media world,” said Leslie Greene Bowman, president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. “This is a wonderfully dynamic opportunity for these students to connect the past to the present, to become engaged with



Students from Albemarle County's Sutherland Middle School compare notes during their day-long “immersion” visit to Monticello in March. TJF

Jefferson's times and legacies and with the history of this area, and to tell those stories with their own voices in their media.”

“We believe that combining multimedia with service learning is a terrific way to truly connect our students with authentic history and real life

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COMMENTS?
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Sixth-graders

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lessons,” said Dave Rogers, principal of Sutherland Middle School. “Partnerships like this benefit the students, their families and our communities alike. This is a wonderful project and we are as excited as we can be about it.”

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership developed *Of the Student, By the Student, For the Student* as a way of connecting students living in the JTHG National Heritage Area with the history that exists practically in their backyards. The program debuted in 2009 in Harpers Ferry, W.Va., in cooperation with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Harpers Ferry Middle School, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Established in 2006, the JTHG Partnership is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the unparalleled history within the swath of land between Monticello and Gettysburg. It has successfully created the JTHG National Heritage Area and has had the Old Carolina Road (U.S. 15, Va. 20, Va. 231) from Gettysburg to Monticello designated a National Scenic Byway. Since its inception, the organization also has developed a variety of educational programs for middle-school and high school students and teachers and college students.



Monticello's Joe Avent makes a point to Sutherland sixth-graders in Jefferson's Bed Chamber. TJF

And while sixth-grade film crews may be new to Jefferson's mountaintop, Monticello has for many years provided a wide range of educational programs for grades 2 through 12. Approximately 15,000 students participate in Monticello's curriculum-based enhanced tour programs each year. Monticello also conducts a Summer Adventures day camp in addition to holding workshops and other developmental activities for both students and teachers and offering an array of resource materials in print and online through the Monticello Classroom feature on the Web site monticello.org.