



Volunteers of the Month

Harpers Ferry Middle School Vodcast Team

Please join Harpers Ferry National Historical Park's Education Staff in honoring local Harpers Ferry Middle School Students as Volunteers of the Month for May 2011.

Harpers Ferry Middle School (HFMS) partners with Harpers Ferry National Historical Park on several service-learning and educational projects each school year. One of these projects has allowed students to create short historical videos (vodcasts) from the students' point of view. Since 2009 teachers together with over 175 sixth through eighth grade students have participated in this innovative school/park volunteer program. This school year alone 59 students contributed nearly 1500 hours during the production of their vodcasts.

The collaborative work of the students started back in October when the entire student population of HFMS hiked to Lower Town Harpers Ferry and spent a day, by grade, learning about how war came to the area in 1861. From there students were asked to participate in the service-learning project - brainstorming topics for the videos and selecting roles they would like to have in the film-making process. After teams of students were received their topics and roles, they were led by student-directors with park staff assistance. Each team respectively researched historical documents, wrote screenplays and storyboards, made and fitted costumes, filmed in the historic setting, created and selected music, and edited film footage. This year's videos total about 30 minutes in length and cover local, regional, and national history.

The students unveiled their vodcasts on April 14, 2011 in a ceremony they choreographed and presented. During the ceremony, a small group of students addressed the audience presenting stories about their experiences with the service-learning project.

The students' time and creativity would not have been possible without the great collaborative spirit of Principal Joseph Spurgas and the teachers of Harpers Ferry Middle School. Their guidance and support of the project allowed students to make their own history by teaching other students throughout the world about this special place where they live and learn. All of these students are truly inspirational contributors and superb additions to Harpers Ferry Parks' diverse volunteer program. Through the entire vodcast experience, the park is lucky to have gained a new young cadre of resource stewards dedicated to the preservation of a piece of national history found right here in Harpers Ferry.

