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Frontier life, history focus of Kansas Day

USD 207 students celebrate Kansas Day.

Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

Students of Unified School District 207 gathered at Patton Junior High School to celebrate Kansas Day Jan. 26. Teachers and 14 volunteers guided students from Bradley, Eisenhower and MacArthur Elementary Schools as they explored state history and learned about various pioneering skills used during those earlier frontier times.

Mary Carter, central office secretary for USD 207, coordinated scheduling volunteers to serve as history exhibitors. Carter also managed the logistical considerations to schedule approximately 536 students in grades 3-5 from all of the elementary schools on post.

“Our volunteer vendors represented both historic figures and useful skills that are associated with our community during history,” Carter said. “We were fortunate to have a broad range of volunteers covering subject areas that included Buffalo Soldiers, soap making, wood carving, butter making, laundress, the Harvey Girls, greeter, wood sawing, hand spinning technique with wool, Lewis and Clark, a pioneer wagon, Kansas kids trail games, Civil War re-enactors, and the Agricultural Hall of Fame.”

Madelynn Miller, an eighth-grader and vice president of Patton Junior High School’s chapter of the National Junior Honor Society, said participating in the celebration is good for her organization because it is another good form of community service and involvement.

“It’s particularly rewarding to have all of the grade-school students here visiting and learning history,” Miller said. “Hosting the Kansas Day celebration here provides a constructive way to for us to interact with several hundred younger students within our community, especially since many of us went to those same schools too.”

Kelley Ebel, who has been teaching in the district for eight years, brought her third-grade students from Bradley Elementary School. She said she believes third grade is a pivotal year and that the celebration is an effective way to bring history to life for students.

“This activity has great learning outcomes related to history and community. The students really enjoy interacting with the volunteers who present as exhibitors here,” Ebel said. “Most of my students seem to especially appreciate participating in the hands-on presentations.”

Gabriel Liscano and Luka Kobidze, two of Ebel’s students, said they had specific aspects they enjoyed about the Kansas Day celebration.

“I liked learning about churning butter,” Liscano said. “It gave me an idea of what life was really like for people who were living during the pioneer days.”

Kobidze, who is from the nation of Georgia, echoed his classmate’s enthusiasm for learning what types of skills were needed for daily life in 19th century Kansas.

“I like learning about all of the different parts of Kansas history and how the people lived,” Kobidze said. “All of the activities here are fun.”

Bill Hatfield, assistant superintendent of USD 207, said he was pleased with what he saw as positive interaction between students and the volunteer exhibitors throughout the exhibition space.

“The line of students waiting to participate in the log saw has been consistently very long,” Hatfield said. “It is great to see such enthusiasm from the students.”

Volunteer Doug Tombaugh managed the log saw exhibition. He said it was constructed and set up in the same manner in which early Kansas pioneers would likely have used it.

“Everyone living in early Kansas had to have a saw, axe and hatchet,” Tombaugh said. “These were among the basic tools for survival — to build with and cut wood for heating and cooking. And, the early contractors here at Fort Leavenworth used a saw like this one we are teaching the students with, in their own businesses to cut wood for the post.”

Kansas Day is an annual observance that commemorates the state’s admission to the Union in 1861. SuAnn Grant, deputy superintendent at USD 207, said the Kansas Day celebration is another effective way to teach students about frontier life, the history of Fort Leavenworth and the community.

“It is always great to have the schools come together for district events like this,” Grant said.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Bradley Elementary School fourth-grader Danielle Pendleton, Bradley fourth-grader Alison Cross, Bradley fourth-grader Isabel Ingleby, parent Megan Fulton, Eisenhower Elementary School fourth-grader Chloe Fulton and Eisenhower fourth-grader Sara Strawn look at cornhusk dolls and learn how they are made at a Kansas Day learning station Jan. 26 at Patton Junior High School. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

