

Patrollers Experience Nation's Capital

Williston's safety patrollers go to Washington



Williston's safety patrollers pose in front of the White House, one of the many stops they made during their 3-day tour of Washington, D. C., and Mount Vernon. The annual trip is paid for by the patrollers, mostly via fund raisers and donations from supportive individuals and organizations. Williston supports its young people!! ☺ Photo by Melissa Boyd.

By Lisa Statham Posteraro

On Friday night, June 20th, the cheer was sounded when Deputy Grant Sandlin's voice announced, "We're back in Levy County!" Yep, the patrollers and their chaperones on Bus #1 were happy to be home. They were returning after three jam-packed days touring the Washington, D. C., area, hosted by the school resource officers (SROs) of the Levy County Sheriff's Office. Two more chartered buses held patrollers from Bronson, Cedar Key, Chiefland and Yankeetown. For Lisa Posteraro, it was her last trip as safety patrol adviser for Williston Elementary School. And, as she'd done each year she's been principal, Marla Hiers had stopped by to bid "Bon voyage!" to the group early Monday morning, June 16th.

Rhesa Collop with Educational Tours out of Inverness accompanied the group as well as Tisha Geiger, the patrollers' assistant adviser. (Becky Zank, the other assistant adviser, stayed home.) Also traveling on Bus 1 were patroller Eli Davis from Williston Central Christian Academy and his father Dennis.

Besides Geiger and Davis, the other chaperones were Deasirea and Thomas Battle, Melissa Boyd, Catherine Davis, Patsy Fugate, Bobbie Stark, Shannon Etheridge, Patty and Steve Griffith, NaTika Edwards, Shanon Blackburn, Susan and Randall Liles, Martina Driskell, Jimmy Owens, Swanyiel Robinson, Christi Crocker, Catrina Sistrunk and Jana VanBlaricum. And for the first time, Posteraro's husband Jim went on the trip. ☺

"It's always interesting and rewarding to know what impressed these young people, what was the most meaningful, what touched their hearts," said adviser Posteraro. After all, most had

worked very hard to raise the \$669 the trip cost. Candy and smoked meat sales, a pancake breakfast in January and the annual “Cruzin’ for Kidz” motorcycle ride in March had brought in thousands of dollars. In addition, many of their fellow patrollers who chose not to go on the trip donated their earnings to the patrollers who needed a little extra to reach their goal. Below are the patrollers’ favorite/most meaningful parts of their pilgrimage to our nation’s capital.

♥ Carter Boyd: “...getting to hang out with my friends and you [Miss Lisa] because it will be my last time with this group, and my favorite place we visited was the Air and Space Museum.”

♥ Cody Battle liked the Air and Space Museum, too, “because of all the planes.”

♥ Caleb Davis: “...seeing the first American flag [at the Museum of American History].”

♥ Eli Davis and Kylie Campbell agreed with Caleb.

♥ Colin Kleintank: “...the Air and Space Museum. The part I liked the most [there] was the Cosmic Coaster. My second favorite part was the Pentagon Memorial [9/11]. My last favorite part was going to the Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials.”

♥ Adam Sistrunk: “...all of Thursday afternoon when we got to go to the Museum of Natural History and any other Smithsonian we wanted to visit.”

♥ Delaney Holcomb: “The most moving was the World War II Memorial.”

♥ Chase Eschbach: “...the Washington Monument because it is beautiful to look at. The Twilight Tattoo was the most moving because they told us the hard facts about the wars. I especially liked hanging out with my friends.”

♥ Anthony Griffith: “I loved the [Smithsonian] museums and the monuments. My favorite was the National Air and Space Museum. My favorite monument was the Lincoln Memorial.”

♥ Hanna Geiger: “...the Twilight Tattoo because of the cannons.”

♥ Ciara Davis and Nicolas Cittadini both liked the Twilight Tattoo as well.

♥ Abigail Lowrimore concurred with Hanna, Ciara and Nicolas. “I also liked the simulator in the Air and Space Museum.”

♥ Anna VanBlaricum: “I liked the Lincoln Memorial most because I have just always wanted to read all the walls and take a picture with him.”

♥ Hannah Rainaldi: “...the Twilight Tattoo and getting to take pictures with the soldiers...and the Washington Monument.”

♥ Kylie Rawls agreed with Hannah; she also loved Mount Vernon, the family home of George Washington.

♥ Saniyah Pullings also liked the Twilight Tattoo and Mount Vernon.

♥ Will Owens: “...the Air and Space Museum because of the simulator and all the planes on the roof...and being in Washington, D. C., with you [Miss Lisa] for your last year.”

♥ Jasmyn Kelly: “I liked the chapel [National Cathedral] because of the amazing artwork and also because President Obama and Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke there.”

♥ Vanessa Valle: “...when we got to watch the 4-D movie [about the history of journalism and the First Amendment at the Newseum] and hanging out with my sweet chaperone [Swanyiel Robinson].”

♥ Kaia Monette: “The most touching thing I visited in Washington was the Vietnam War Memorial because I am very grateful for all those men and women who died for our freedom.”

♥ Victoria Dosey appreciated spending time with her mom alone. She also liked riding the Metro, Washington’s subway, and seeing the Lincoln Monument.

♥ Colby Etheridge liked the Lincoln Monument, too. “And Martin Luther King, Jr. was 30 feet tall!” Because he visited the 9/11 Memorial next to the Pentagon, Colby will remember that on 9/11 “an airplane ran into the Pentagon and buried the people by the Pentagon.”

♥ Mikey Hopson enjoyed the Smithsonian Museums, but “the thing that touched me the most was the Holocaust Museum.”

♥ Allison Liles: “...going to all the Smithsonians and seeing the ‘star-spangled banner’.”

♥ Billy Bush: “...the Lincoln Monument, and the thing that was the most meaningful was the [various] veterans’ memorials.”

♥ Desiron Gray: “...when we went into the interactive airplane ride [in the Air and Space Museum] and when Caleb [Davis] was screaming! It was funny and you got to go upside down, plus I got to control it. I also liked the Twilight Tattoo.”

♥ Edith Delacruz: “...when we saw the White House and having the best time with my roommates [Victoria, Chase and Allie] and Kaia.”

♥ Saul Alonso also liked the simulator ride. “My favorite movie was the 4-D movie [at the Newseum] because it showed what the reporters did to get the news. My favorite part was when we went to the White House because that’s where the President lives.”

♥ José Rios-Rocha totally agreed with Saul!

♥ Aron Centeno: “...all of the memorials because it told us facts about all our American heroes.”

Parent Shanon Blackburn shared her “favorites” which were the different memorials. She also enjoyed going on the Cosmic Coaster with her son Colin Kleintank plus going to all the Smithsonian Museums with him.

“Our tour guide, Elaine Flynn, always makes history come alive for us. She does an amazing job. We learned she had family members who died in the Holocaust. And she also makes us chuckle...quite often,” said adviser Posteraro. “She also appreciated the box of ‘local treats’ we brought her from Williston Peanuts.

“Of course, a trip such as this is SO easy because of our super dedicated chaperones AND the tireless efforts of the Levy County Sheriff’s Office staff plus SROs,” added Posteraro. Besides Sandlin, other SROs included Deputies Steve Ellis and Keith Osteen. Lt. Sean Mullins and Sgt. Max Long rounded out the entourage along with EMT Paige Beverly Hiers.

Hopefully, the tradition of the “Levy County Safety Patrol Trip to Washington” will continue. If you have ever experienced this trip as a Levy County Safety Patroller, please contact Sheriff Bobby McCallum and let him know how important it is for the LCSO to continue to host this trip. “With budget cuts what they are, we need to let Sheriff McCallum know how much we appreciate his staff taking us on this fantastic and worthwhile trip and keeping us safe,” said Posteraro.

“We saw and learned so much and made so many grand memories. You cannot visit Washington and not be reminded what it took to create this great nation...and to keep it a free nation! Even with its ‘faults,’ we should be so proud and realize how lucky we are to be Americans!” concluded Posteraro.