

THE FUND FOR YOUNG PATRIOTS



The American Revolution secured our national independence, established our republic, created our national identity and articulated ideals of liberty, equality, civic responsibility and natural and civil rights that has shaped our nation's history and will continue to shape future generations—unless they forget. That is the challenge that we, as descendants for soldiers who gave us that legacy, we must take up.

OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- ❖ Inform American history education in northern Nevada, to ensure that the story of our Revolution, the accomplishments of the revolutionaries, and the legacy of the Revolution are widely recognized, understood, and appreciated;
- ❖ Advocate for the memory, ideals and legacy of the American Revolution.
- ❖ Offer at least one presentation a month during the school year.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The bad news about history education keeps piling up. Knowledge of our American heritage has been declining for some time and it has not diminished. Consider the 2000 report titled, *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*, by the American Council for Trustees and Alumni. That survey, based on a questionnaire given to students from America's top 55 colleges and universities, uncovered an astounding ignorance of the basic facts of American history among the best and brightest recent college graduates. Exactly 23% of those tested knew that James Madison was the principal author of the Constitution. At the same time, nearly everyone knew everything about popular culture, and 99% correctly identified Beavis and Butthead.

A more recent study, *The Vanishing West, 1964 – 2010*, documents the drastic changes in undergraduate history requirements since 1964. At the college level, the once-familiar class in Western Civilization, or some close equivalent, has simply vanished. It's been replaced by literally nothing in some cases or a bewildering range of options in others. If college students do study history, the chances that they'll gain any sense of the Big Picture once imparted by the old broad surveys are essentially nil.

On the heels of the above report comes the US Education Department's National Assessment of Educational Progress survey, *The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2010*. As the title indicates, this study measures knowledge of the rudiments of US history among K-12 students. The results, to put it charitably, are dismal. According to data reported in the survey, 20% of fourth grade students, 17% of eighth graders, and 12% of high school seniors performed well enough to be rated "proficient." It looks even worse when you invert those positive figures: 80% of fourth graders, 83% of eighth graders and 88% of high school seniors flunked the minimum proficiency rating.

The history and ideals of the American Revolution are the foundation of our national identity. If they are forgotten, we will have nothing to hold us together. Future generations, unaware of the historic sacrifices that secured our liberty, will fail to value that liberty and sacrifice to preserve it. Our country, as it has been for more than two hundred years, will be lost.

We can't let that happen. We are working to perpetuate the remarkable story of our Revolution and the ideals we hold most dear. We cannot underestimate the challenge before us. It will not be easy, but if we don't try who will? We can start by doing what we can, where we are with what we have.

WHAT CAN WE DO AND WHAT DO WE HAVE?

What we have are presentations that go beyond just the presentation of names, places and dates. We have lesson plans that present the Revolutionary War era as an expression of the passion precipitated by events and the ideals that drove them. Our presentations include:

1. Reading of the Declaration of Independence (DOI). This presentation is a re-enactment of the reading of the DOI to the troops of the Continental Army. On July 9, 1776, at the command of General Washington, the DOI was read to the assembled troops. In our presentation SAR members read parts of the Declaration. Prior to our presentation, each class is designated to represent notable regiments of the Continental Army or militia. They are given a history of the regiment including: when it was formed, its commanders, battles fought, flags, uniform descriptions and when disbanded.
2. Presentation of flags of the colonial era. In this presentation we present an array of flags (currently about 15 flags) dating from the earliest flags of colonial America to the first flags of a newly founded United States of America. The presentation includes a history of the flag and why it was important.
3. Music of the Revolution. In this presentation the Fifes & Drums of Nevada play familiar tunes from the late 18th century along with a narration that explains their significance. In camp, the daily activities of the soldiers were heralded by fife and drum tunes that regulated their day from sun up to lights out.
4. The Traveling Trunk. The Traveling Trunk presentation is a nationally funded and endorsed program for classes at all levels. The trunk contains items typically used by people of the era. In this presentation the presenters are dressed in clothing of the era, and we discuss how each item was worn and why it was used.
5. The Molly Pitcher Story. Molly Pitcher may not have been a real person, but her story brings the role of women in the Revolution into high relief. Through her story we can tell how the real life stories of women and the revolution. We are proud to be joined by the ladies of the SAR Women's Auxilliary who make this presentation possible. They tell the story of the role women played in securing our freedom.
6. Stories of Our Ancestors. We are also working on developing stories about our own Revolutionary War ancestors. For us, the era is illuminated by the stories of our ancestors and we have found that when told well these same stories inspire the students.

