

# Students hunt national treasure from Cedar Hills to D.C.

Ashley King - Correspondent | Posted: Friday, August 21, 2009 12:00 am



In the spirit of the Nicholas Cage movie "National Treasure," a group of high schoolers, including two students from American Heritage, went on a National Treasure Quest this month.

Most participants had to pay for their trip, but two participants won trips by placing in the ConSource Essay Contest.

"American Heritage school students Erika Brown and Michael Morris, Jr., won all-expenses-paid trips to Revolution-era historical sites with the Journey Foundations National Treasure Quest," said American Heritage School administrator Leland Anderson.

The trip was set up as a quest. A brochure describes it as "a 14-day adventure that will take you on an incredible journey through our nation's founding from Independence Hall in Philadelphia to the Rotunda of the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. Teams will have to rely on their collective knowledge to figure out clues that will lead them from one historical site to another ... reminiscent of the popular movie. The experience will culminate with the amazing discovery of our true National Treasure!"

Brown, a Cedar Hills resident, said the group met on the BYU campus and were put into groups of four. Then they visited sites around Provo and met with Provo Mayor Lewis Billings before flying to Philadelphia.

Each group got an envelope with eight clues that would lead to historic sites, Brown said. The clues were word searches, riddles, pictures, puzzles and more. Each person on the team was necessary to solve each clue.

"The clues were definitely fun," Morris said. "It was nice to figure that out on our own and give us more of an independent feel. Some of them were hard and some were easy, but it was definitely a team effort. Some people would get the words right and others would think about their historical significance."

The trip was designed to develop leadership skills in the students. It took them to many historical sites including the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, the Declaration House, Carpenter's Hall, Quaker Meeting House, Old First Reformed Church and many more.

"Two of my favorite parts in Philadelphia were seeing the Liberty Bell and the Declaration House [where the Declaration of Independence was first drafted] and learning the history behind those places," Brown said.

After Philadelphia, the group visited Valley Forge and Gettysburg, Pa.; Washington, D.C.; and Arlington National Cemetery.

While in Washington, D.C., the groups had the opportunity to create a quest for another team.

"This time we were given locations to see and it was our responsibility to make up clues for them. The next day we exchanged clues," Brown said.

While visiting various sites, participants had time to pause and reflect on the significance of the location in our national history and in each individual's life.

"One of my favorites was going to the Pentagon and seeing the memorial for 9/11," Brown said. "I thought and reflected while I was there. Each individual was given time to reflect about who we are and who we want to become while we were at the Lincoln Memorial. We were surrounded by monuments that were dedicated to great leaders and each of us was inspired to become a leader."

Morris said he most enjoyed visiting places where significant historical events occurred.

"I'm really into American history and that's something I plan to continue into college," Morris said. "Being there and seeing the places and where they did what they did made it so much more real to me."

Brown said the trip tied into what her winning essay was about.

"In my essay I talked about tearing down our internal walls," Brown said. "The monuments and memorials that I visited showed thousands of people that tore down their own walls, stood up and fought for what they believed in. Walls of fear, walls of blame and walls of guilt were conquered by each soldier and each Founding Father for our freedom in America."