



Georgia Historical Society brings history into classroom

Posted: April 20, 2011 - 7:05pm

Education is the cornerstone of the Georgia Historical Society's mission, and it is a leader in producing exciting and informative educational programming for school children and adults.

The various efforts include curriculum information for schools, living history events and daily contributions to statewide broadcast programming.

Education is the underpinning for the organization that, since 1839, has housed and cared for the oldest and most distinguished collection of materials related exclusively to Georgia history.

"We collect, preserve and share Georgia history for the purpose of educating others," explained Stan Deaton, senior historian for the Georgia Historical Society.

One of the most significant ways GHS fulfills this mission is by providing educational programs that explore the state's and nation's past. Through these programs, GHS offers an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Georgian and an American.

"Cultural institutions like ours are not luxuries – they are essential components to the life of a community," Deaton said. "We play a vital role in this community by educating others."

To carry out that mission, GHS provides a variety of programs and educational events throughout the year, including lectures, teacher workshops and training, classes and contests for students. Every year GHS develops curriculum materials for teachers at all grade levels.

The signature K-12 educational program of GHS is the Georgia History Festival. Held annually around the anniversary of the founding of the Georgia colony on Feb. 12, 1733, this commemoration brings history to life for students of all ages through a variety of programs.

These programs include a series of school events and curricula, crafts workshops, the two-day Colonial Faire and Muster living-history program held at Wormsloe State Historic Site, and the colorful Georgia Day parade. By engaging students in interactive learning experiences, Georgia History Festival sparks the imagination, develops critical thinking processes and opens the world of the past to exploration, study and understanding.

The Georgia Historical Society knows Georgia has a history that deserves to be widely shared and deeply understood, especially by those who call Georgia 'home.'

As an educational institution, the Georgia Historical Society is committed to the study, teaching and learning of history. According to Deaton, that commitment is vital to the following things:

- Thinking critically and imaginatively about the issues that confront us as citizens;
- Developing the ability to think creatively about solving problems and viewing the world holistically;
- Participating in reasoned and open-minded discussions of the basic values that are at stake in the policies proposed by elected officials; and
- Understanding and appreciating how the issues that confront us have been understood in other times, places and cultures.

One of GHS's newest educational endeavors is a daily history initiative called Today in Georgia History that partners GHS with Georgia Public Broadcasting to present daily history snapshots that appeal to general audiences. These historical moments, broadcast on radio and television, will explore Georgia's rich and storied past.

Through this partnership, GHS will share more than 4 million historical treasures with close to 3.6 million households in Georgia. The society's goal is to foster within Georgia's future leaders a deep appreciation for, and understanding of, this state's rich history and its people.

Today in Georgia History will also serve more than 116,000 Georgia educators through the creation of an online, interdisciplinary portal to the past.

This unique instructional tool will engage, entertain and educate students across all grade levels in social studies, science, math, reading and language arts, said Deaton. Detailed transcripts, resource listings, teacher tips and classroom exercises are also part of this partnership.

“I’m excited about the Today in Georgia History initiative,” said Laura Garcia-Culler, Georgia Historical Society’s executive vice president.

“This project is not just about historical facts and dates, it’s about putting history into the context of its importance today.”

Georgia’s history is told by the diverse people who have called the state home for centuries.

Today in Georgia History is an exploration of Georgia’s rich and storied past, sharing the lives of Georgia’s most influential people, as well as the less well-known. This initiative will revisit Georgia’s Native American tribes, the battlefields of the American Revolution and the Civil War, the civil rights marches of the 1960s and the glory of the Atlanta Olympics.

It will also unearth the unusual, the overlooked and the little-known. It will tell the stories of the people who have come before us and created the world we live in. The stories of all the state’s people will be featured — the extraordinary and the ordinary alike.

With all its education and outreach programs, Georgia Historical Society doesn’t focus only on history. It recognizes that education is the backbone of our nation.

“We need to educate others on history. It’s arguably the most important of all the humanities,” Deaton said when speaking of GHS’s stance on education. “Without it, we cannot possibly govern ourselves wisely or well.”

For more information on the Georgia Historical Society and its educational programs, visit their website at www.georgiahistory.com.

Photo credits:

1. Children participate in the Georgia Days Festival. This festival is organized and implemented by the Georgia Historical Society to educate the community on the rich and storied history of the state of Georgia.

Photo credit: Russ Bryant

2. Same cutline as above.

Photo credit: Russ Bryant

3. Same cutline as above.

Photo credit: Russ Bryant

4. Volunteers participate in the Georgia Historical Society’s Colonial Faire and Muster. This event features re-enactors who bring history alive during this annual living-history event.

Photo credit: Russ Bryant