

CCGA Education Students lead Historic Cemetery Field Trip

By ANNA HALL The Brunswick News

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An eighth-grader at Glynn Middle School, the 14-year-old student was one of 55 pupils from her school to join a cohort of instructors from College of Coastal Georgia for the first-ever graveyard lesson plan.

For one of her assignments during the hour-long field trip, Angel worked to create a charcoal rubbing of one of the historic headstones in Greenwood Cemetery. In her first attempt, the grey charcoal she used as a rubbing medium was less than successful.

“You couldn’t really read it,” Angel said.

But her second go at the project produced more positive results, thanks to the quick thinking of College of Coastal Georgia education major Shelby English, who suggested McClain use a brighter colored crayon instead of charcoal. After minutes of rubbing the large sheet of white paper held over the headstone by English, Angel began to make out the grave marker.

“Oh wow, how cool,” Angel said, holding up her finished product. “I can’t wait to get back to school to show other kids what we did here today.”

Eleven teachers from the college’s middle grades education major program worked to help students through various lesson plans within the confines of the historic cemetery.

Tapping into creative lesson plan outlets, college students designed an array of educational activities, from scavenger hunts, to finger painting family trees and creating a mock underground railroad. A variety of lessons were taught through the diverse learning exercises, including teaching students about slavery, World War II, Pearl Harbor and segregation, by examining headstones and learning the layout of the cemetery.

There is a wealth of information just below the surface of the cemetery, said Sarah Hartman, the professor overseeing the field trip and leading the 11 students through the semester's effective instruction for middle grades course.

"Each headstone in this cemetery tells a story and can be connected, in some way, to a history lesson our college students are learning how to teach to middle grades," Hartman said. "My students have worked for the bulk of this fall semester to research this project, create interesting lesson plans and prepare for this one day of learning."

Students from the college conducted self-guided tours of the cemetery and open records research and studied creative teaching practices to develop the afternoon field trip Thursday, Hartman said, noting the activity was "just as much of an experience for the middle school students as it was for my students."

"It took a lot of work to get this together and it will be a great addition to students' portfolios next semester."

The education majors' hard work paid off, said Kimberly Mannahan, director of service-learning for academic affairs at the college.

Watching as students in groups of five traveled from grave to grave with an instructor to examine a variety of historical and social study topics, Mannahan voiced her excitement for the college partnering with the county school system to provide learning opportunities such as the one playing out before her.

"When you get kids out of the classroom and away from the textbooks, they have a completely different learning experience. The lessons really hit home when students can be an active part of the process," she said. "I mean, just look how their faces light up with each lesson. It's like magic."

It was the first time Hartman had taken her students through such a thorough and innovative historical implementation of lesson plans, and she's not planning on it being her last. Next fall, when a new cohort of middle grade education students steps into her classroom, she hopes to replicate the lesson and perhaps stretch it out further.

"Next year, I not only want to do this again but hopefully even expand it to make it a longer field trip or a multi-day experience so the students can learn more about the history of our community and even learn about cemetery etiquette," Hartman said. "This day has gone very smoothly and it has played out to be a huge learning experience for everyone involved."