

Past comes alive

History Camp provides fun, lessons for youngsters

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Hands shot up when Sherri Rawstern asked kids for a volunteer to haul buckets of water Wednesday at the History Camp in Centennial Village north of Aberdeen.

That reaction might be modern parents' dream when they ask who wants to get the groceries from the car.

But that's what the camp is all about - making the everyday life of the past come to life in a fun way, said Rawstern, who is in charge of the camp and the curator of education for the Dacotah Prairie Museum, which runs the event.

"That's how I like to teach. I make it fun for them," she said.

At the camp, which runs today, Friday and July 18, the kids learn various aspects about life 120 years ago, when Aberdeen began.

"It's an idea of a day-long camp that can help the children experience what it was like to be their age in 1881," Lora Schaunaman, curator of exhibits with the museum, said.

Kids churn butter, play pioneer games, make stew for dinner and tour the various buildings at the village, many of which are from the 1800s and moved to the location like the one-room schoolhouse.

The children, ranging in age from 8 to 13, toured the school. And looking at the ages of the class of 1922-23, one gets an idea how different education must have been when one teacher had to teach kids between the ages of 6 and 15 all in one room.

Learning about history is another important aspect of the camp, Rawstern said. Kids learn about sod houses and what it was like to live in one. They learn that buildings were painted white to keep them cooler inside. And they learn that sundials don't compensate for daylight savings time.

The kids are asked to leave their electronics, including portable game systems and cellular phones, at home. And that teaches them to use their minds, Rawstern said.

"It's a slower pace out here, and sometimes they have to learn how to use their imaginations," she said. "It gives them an appreciation for what it was like, what they had to go through. And we learn from the past."

Eight-year-old Daniel Sharp, of Bath, said he was learning a lot about history, but he said he wasn't sure if he would like to be a kid 120 years ago.

"Ask me that in a hundred years from now," he said.

Britney Senger, also 8, of Aberdeen, was a little bit more confident about living a century ago.

"I'd have fun," she said. "Once you keep getting older and older, though, you might want to take a break and go back where you began and then go back."

There are still openings on Friday and July 18 for children between the age of 8 and 13 to sign up for History Camp, which costs \$15. For more information contact the Dacotah Prairie Museum at 605-626-7117.

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History Campers Megan Rush, left, Claire Vetter, Mara Samson and Britney Senger look over the items on the table in a one room sod house at Centennial Village Wednesday. The camp gives children a glimpse into the past with a tour of the vintage buildings on the Brown County Fairgrounds.



Christy Renner, right, reaches to tag India Aderhold, left, as she drops a clothes pin during an game of tag at History Camp at Centennial Village Wednesday. The object of the game was for Renner and the other campers to sneak up quietly on Aderhold, who would drop the clothes pin when she heard them. The camp gives children a glimpse into the past with a tour of the vintage buildings on the Brown County Fairgrounds.



American News Photo by John Davis Walk and learn Augustine Boland, 8, left, walks the rails with other History Camp campers at Centennial Village on Wednesday. The camp gives children a glimpse into the past with a tour of the vintage buildings at the Brown County Fairgrounds.