

Raging Reptiles Day and Raptors Library Night



Abingdon Elementary received a \$500 mini-grant from the Washington Post to hold a day-long Raging Reptiles Program on April 17. Raging Reptiles is a science enrichment program for students in pre-K through 5th grade. Students explore various exotic reptiles through group presentations and hands-on experience by Raging Reptiles staff. In addition, students will complement their scientific learning by exploring the world of reptiles through fiction in their language arts classes. They will express their understanding by developing poetry, literature, art or music from the concepts presented.

Science enrichment will continue into the night, when the third in a series of four Library Nights is held at 6 PM. Following a free pizza dinner, members of the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia will be bringing some of their feathered friends to show to students and their families. They will educate everyone on the types of birds they help, and share how we can all ensure the survival of these raptors for future generations.

Every Abingdon family in attendance will receive a free book on owls. There will also be door prizes featuring other raptor books and bonus library check-out. Library Nights are funded out of a joint Title I/Title V federal grant.

For more information, please contact Abingdon PTA VP Tina Mas-

ciangioli at 703-931-7086 or tina.masc@verizon.net.

Kindergarten Orientation

The third and final Abingdon Kindergarten orientation for this school year will be held on Thursday, April 12 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. Come to hear about Abingdon Elementary School's unique and successful exemplary educational program-Project GIFT.

Thank you community members

Abingdon greatly appreciates all the support it receives from Fairlington and nearby community members. Thanks to Anne Golden and BB&T in Shirlington for donating pencils and a book about Maya Angelou to Abingdon in honor of Black History Month in February. In addition, thanks to Wakefield parent Carol in Fairlington Glen for collecting Box Tops for Education from General Mills products. You too can help support the school by designating Abingdon on frequent shopper cards at Giant, Target, or Harris Teeter; or by sending in Box Tops from General Mills products or labels from

Campbell's soup products to the school. Money raised in this way helps support student assemblies, after school programs, field trips, and educational materials.

Visit the Friends of Abingdon Neighborhood School (FANS) Web site at www.friendsofabingdon.org to find out more about Abingdon, join the FANS e-mail group or subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter.

Architecture Class Cements Math and History Concepts

European castles and pioneer forts are just some of the things elementary students are building in Abingdon's cultural architecture class. The only of its kind in the country, the class was created by **David McDavitt**, a Fairlington resident

and Abingdon teacher of 13 years. Because Abingdon students stay in school on Arlington Public Schools (APS) early-release Wednesdays, they benefit from extra courses, on top of the core academics common to all APS schools. Throughout the year, students rotate through different wheel classes: Architecture, 20th Century Communications, and Science Lab. These classes provide authentic, real-world contexts in which children make academic concepts come to life.

In Mr. McDavitt's beloved Architecture class, children solve real-world problems (using measurement and geometry) to create scale models of cathedrals, pyramids, mosques, tee-pees, and much more. At the same time, they learn about the culture and worldviews behind these historical structures. For example,



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kindergarteners might learn the difference between modern and ancient, built and natural. In first grade, children may recreate the Washington Monument and discover homes around the world. Second graders map out floor plans and build a miniature Great Wall of China. In third grade, kids might learn about ancient Greece and ancient Mali. Fourth graders absorb Native American history while building reproductions of Algonquin villages. And fifth graders explore the Stone Age, the Medieval period, and Inca and Aztec culture through architecture of the times.

The hands-on focus of the class is enlivened further by working architects who come to the classroom and class field trips to places like the National Building Museum. Perhaps this Chinese proverb would best explain why Abingdon's architecture class is helping students achieve success in math and social studies: "I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.



Fourth graders explore medieval architecture, forts, geometry, measurement, economics, and the history of the Jamestown by constructing a model of Fort James. Photo courtesy of David McDavitt.



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