

Explorer's grandnephew teaches kids some history

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Staff Writer

Edmondson-Westside Vocational Senior High School students received a special history lesson yesterday from a relative of North Pole explorer Matthew A. Henson.

James Henson, the explorer's grandnephew, told students about his recent pilgrimage to the North Pole "to track the paths of my ancestor and to visit my Inuit cousins."

Matthew Henson is a Marylander who is credited with helping Adm. Robert E. Peary reach the North Pole on April 6, 1909. Mr. Henson said his granduncle fathered a child by an Inuit woman and his cousins are the explorer's descendants.

Mr. Henson, 56, was invited to the school as part of a program that provides positive role models for special education students.

Approximately 60 students listened attentively as Mr. Henson spoke about his famous granduncle and gave an inspirational message. He told the students that they can make their dreams realities by using their minds.

"Program your minds to be heirs to the future and don't let anybody take that away from you," Mr. Hen-

son said.

"Uncle Matthew started from humble beginnings, with menial jobs. But he had dreams and he elevated himself from Charles County to the top of the world."

Mr. Henson lives in Ellicott City and serves as the acting administrator of Howard County's Office of Human Rights.

He visited the arctic regions of Greenland April 3-11 to commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the expedition that is credited with reaching the North Pole.

Many students seemed intrigued by James Henson's adventures. Fifteen-year-old Brian Phillips said he would like to travel to the arctic regions someday.

Students watched and listened attentively as Mr. Henson showed videos of his arctic travels, which included a visit to the Inuit village where his cousins live. Mr. Henson said he met his cousins several years ago when they visited the United States as part of a reunion that included the Inuit descendants of Admiral Peary.

Mr. Henson said he endured a four-hour dog sled ride at temperatures that dipped to 45 degrees below zero to get to the village.

Seeing his cousins, he said, was "the most moving part of the trip."



AMY DAVIS/STAFF PHOTO

Explorers

James Henson — with photo of his grand uncle, arctic explorer Matthew Henson — talks to students here about his own trip to the North Pole. (Article, Page 2B)

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