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SFPD Officer Takes Students to Our Nation's Capital

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In 2008 Officer Todd Burks began teaching G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) at Horace Mann and Martin Luther King Junior Middle Schools. It was his first exposure as a police officer to a class of honor roll students on a regular basis. Officer Burks was surprised to learn that many of them had not experienced travel outside of San Francisco. Some of the students had not even been to the Golden Gate Bridge. As a result, Officer Burks decided to take some of his students to Washington DC, via the “Close-Up” program. “Close Up,” is a nationwide program designed to bring children from various backgrounds to Washington, DC to learn about government and become informed and engaged citizens.

Officer Burks, Officer Frances Williams (who was teaching G.R.E.A.T. at Visitation Valley Middle School), and Lieutenant Troy Dangerfield (who was assigned to The Police Academy), teamed up to make that first Washington, DC trip a reality.

Following a successful first trip, Officer Burks partnered with Mr. Deric Bryson, a teacher at MLK. They have worked together to take students to Washington, DC since 2008.

From June 2 through 6, 2015, Officer Burks will accompany 16 students from Buena Vista-Horace Mann K-8 Community School and Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School to Washington, DC as a part of “World Strides Washington Middle School Program.” World Strides brings students and teachers from across the country to Washington DC in order to experience the history, politics, and culture of the nation’s capital. Students will participate in a variety of activities including small group workshops, seminars with: journalists, lobbyists, and embassy officials, and meetings with members of Congress and their staff. Additionally, students will experience debate contests that will expose them to differing attitudes and perspectives.

The June 2015 trip will be Officer Burk’s 5th year taking children to Washington DC. Given these students come from schools located in economically under-resourced neighborhoods, community support is needed to raise funds to cover travel, meal, and lodging expenses that will enable these students to experience our nation’s capital at work. As of this week, the program is still \$16,500 short. This is a learning experience that will last a lifetime.

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