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CONTACT: Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

Bonita Unified Middle Schoolers Experience Living History During Annual Renaissance Faire

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Using pool noodles as lances and large tricycles as horses, Ramona Middle School seventh-graders faced off in a series of medieval jousting matches during the school's annual Renaissance Faire, held April 10, where students experienced living history by recreating activities that brought the world out of the Middle Ages.

From launching trebuchets and stilt-walking to dressing peasant dolls and creating woodblock prints, Ramona's Renaissance Faire had something for every student, including a falconry demonstration and a live whip-cracker/juggling performance.

"Renaissance history is part of the seventh-grade curriculum and we thought that instead of just teaching this from a book, we could give the students a chance to live the history," Ramona seventh-grade teacher Hillary Hageman said. "It's a really fun day for the kids. They love to dress up and every activity or game is a window into this special time in world history."

Nearly 400 Ramona students participated in the Faire, with the majority dressing in Renaissance-era clothing. Girls wore long, billowy dresses with braided headwear, while the boys dressed in capes, jester's hats and monk's attire.

Steeping themselves in Renaissance culture, Ramona students were required to visit at least six booths, where they assembled jewelry, shot bows and arrows, had their face painted and created chainmail armor or woodblock prints. There was even a selfie station with a green screen providing backdrops of medieval dungeons and castles. The abundance of activities was greeted enthusiastically by students.

"I really liked that there were so many things from the time period and that we actually got to do things instead of just learning about them," Ramona seventh-grader Sofia C. said. "One of the best activities was archery. I liked that we got to participate in it and shoot arrows instead of just watching people do it or see it on television. It was fun to participate."

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To bring the Renaissance Faire to life, Ramona enlists more than three dozen parent volunteers, who help staff the booths, talk to the students about various aspects of Renaissance life and provide snacks.

"We absolutely could not do our Renaissance Faire without the help of our amazing parents," Ramona social studies teacher Brandon Olney said. "Our parents are fully engaged with the event. Some dress up and we even have a few grandparents joining in. It is truly a community event."

To add to the creative spirit of the day, Ramona teachers give the students suggestions on how to design a Renaissance costume at home. Students can also opt to try on and rent wardrobe and apparel from a local costumer, which serves as a fundraiser because a set portion of the fees collected for the costumes are returned by the costumer to the school, to help pay for Faire expenses.

"The Renaissance Faire is great fun for our students and one of our most-anticipated events of the year," Ramona Principal James Ellis said. "We couldn't have a day like this without the tremendous work done by our seventh-grade social studies teachers, who work hard to ensure the Faire is a success, and allow our kids to better understand what history has to teach us, and that it can be fun to learn."

PHOTOS:

BUSD_RENFAIRE1: Ramona Middle School seventh-grade students get in the spirit during the school's annual Renaissance Faire, held April 10. Nearly 400 Ramona students participated in the Faire, with the majority dressing in Renaissance-era clothing.

BUSD_RENFAIRE2: Ramona Middle School seventh-graders practice their aim on an archery range during the school's annual Renaissance Faire, held April 10. Students experienced living history by recreating activities that were common during the Renaissance period.

BUSD_RENFAIRE3: Ramona Middle School seventh-grade students take a break during the school's annual Renaissance Faire, held April 10. The event allowed students to steep themselves in Renaissance-era culture, and included a live falconry demonstration and whip-cracker juggling.

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