

Fifth graders learn about the best of Minnesota

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by Mandy Moran Froemming

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Tim Stevens explains some of the interesting facts about Minnesota-made Spam.

Fifth-grade students from St. Stephen's Catholic School hosted their first State Fair, showcasing what they are learning about Minnesota in their reading and social studies classes.

Instead of midway rides and fried foods on a stick, this display had its fair share homegrown history.

"It is a chance for them to learn about the people and places of Minnesota," said fifth-grade teacher Katie Geis.

She admits the State Fair idea came from her mom, a teacher at St. John the Baptist Catholic School in Savage. She said the two regularly share teaching ideas.

The students pulled their project topics out of a hat, which meant many of them were learning about something brand new.

"A lot of them took family field trips so they could take pictures to go with their projects," said Geis.

That's what Ryan Heaney did. He visited the Jeffers Petroglyphs in southwestern Minnesota where the Indians left carvings of humans and animals, over an estimated 5,000 years.

Thomas Leonard learned about the Homestead Act of 1862 while researching sod houses. He visited one in Redwood County, and with the help of his mom, built a smaller version for the fair.

Ethan Doltzer was excited to share his experience at Fort Snelling, which he visited for a second time.

He saw the canon, "that isn't really a canon," said Ethan, fire at 2:30 p.m., witnessed some wood carving and took pictures from of the fort to go with his project.

There was a rebuilt version of the Duluth aerial lift bridge, and samples of Spam being handed out by Tim Stevens.

"I was surprised to learn Spam came in so many flavors," said Stevens.

The turkey flavored variety is his favorite.

Throughout the day 341 people visited the fair.

St. Stephen's Catholic School offers preschool through eighth grade in Anoka.

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