

American Heritage School celebrates 40th anniversary

Easton Brown - Correspondent | Posted: Saturday, September 26, 2009 12:00 am



AMERICAN FORK -- Parents, students, faculty members and community members gathered earlier this month at American Heritage School, a private school in American Fork, to celebrate its 40th anniversary and rededicate its building after a recent expansion.

The evening's highlights included boys dressed as Revolutionary War soldiers performing a flag ceremony, children dressed in colonial era clothes singing patriotic songs, and a special video presentation honoring veterans. During the celebration, Principal Grant Beckwith recognized and honored previous and current faculty

members, and all those who have contributed their time and resources to the school. Among those in attendance and recognized was Shirley Anderson, the wife of one of the school's founders, the late Dr. H. Verlan Anderson.

Students began attending American Heritage School in 1970 after Dr. Anderson, a professor at BYU, collaborated with other BYU professors to establish a private school that included Christian morality and patriotism in the curriculum, following the closure of the BYU Training School.

The first students who attended American Heritage School, 85 in total, met in an old LDS chapel in Pleasant Grove purchased by Anderson. The first textbooks used at American Heritage School were retrieved by Anderson and his wife from a dry river bed in Phoenix, after the books had been dumped there. Faculty members made great sacrifices during the school's early years, earning small salaries.

Although current enrollment at the school has increased to more than 500 students since its humble origins, administrators continue to root the school's curriculum in the principles it was founded on. In a speech before the assembled audience, Laurie Swim, the chairwoman of the school's board of directors, said the school continues to remain committed to instilling in students the importance of "God, country and academic excellence."

American Fork Mayor Heber Thompson was the evening's keynote speaker. Thompson commended the school's faculty for preparing students to be productive and informed citizens, stating that the opportunity to "participate and determine what kind of men and women represent us" is one of the most important privileges of American citizenship.

Principal Grant Beckwith attributes the school's longevity to an "unwavering focus on a principal-based mission." For this reason, many parents are now sending their children to American Heritage School.

Craig and Corinne Richkenback of American Fork moved from southern Utah so their three children could attend American Heritage School. According to Corinne Richkenback, she and her husband send their children to American Heritage School because it is "gospel-centered, principle-centered."

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