

LOCAL



The Emerson Waldorf School 11th grade class traveled to Washington, D.C., for the inauguration as part of their American History Class. The students are Bo Marchman (from left), Adam Raymond, Gabriel Boyd-Nikias, Cailyn Pozzella-Durling, Hans Lie-Nielsen, Evan Jonson, Emily Boykin, Graeme Durovich, Gabriel Warren, Corey Jolly, Rebecca Ripperton, and Lindsey Johnson.

Teens travel to D.C. for inauguration

BY ERIN WILTGEN
 chh@heraldsun.com; 918-1035

CHAPEL HILL — Even the small side street in Washington, D.C., teemed with people. But as Hans Lie-Nielsen topped the rise and took sight of the National Mall, the presidential inauguration crowds stopped him in his tracks.

"Even at 6 in the morning it was just people as far as you could see," the 16-year-old Chapel Hill resident said. "I had the idea in my head that there would be millions of people. But to actually see millions of people was just mind-blowing."

Lie-Nielsen traveled to the U.S. Capitol early Monday morning with other members of Emerson Waldorf School's junior class, accompanied by their history teacher, Nancy Balasubramanian, and four other chaperones.

The group braved frigid weather to witness the swearing-in of the nation's 44th president Tuesday. Despite the cold, the teenagers found themselves swept up in the excitement of the moment as then President-elect Barack Obama walked onto the platform.

"It was great because you looked around, and every single face was emotional and excited," said Corey Jolly, 16, of Mebane. "That was the reason we had been waiting in the cold for six hours."

Jolly said the people filling the Mall screamed, clapped and waved tiny American flags. Lie-Nielsen, one of the taller boys in the bunch, stood on a fence to look out over the crowd.

"There were just people jumping up and down as far as you could see," he said. "You couldn't hear because of the cheering." Balasubramanian said the minute people began entering the platform and the students could see the screen, the energy increased.

"The excitement was

"Over and over again I was thinking, 'This is going to go down in history. I'm so happy to be a part of it.'"

Hans Lie Nielsen

11th-grader at Emerson Waldorf School

Obama gave his speech almost everyone on the Mall was silent. They were just spellbound, including the students."

The emotion of the inauguration certainly seemed to take hold of the teens. Jolly said that by the time Obama was sworn into office, tears were streaming down her face.

"I've turned into such a cynical person in 16 years about the government and our country," she said. "It was this moment when it was like it doesn't have to be that way. It just gave me that innocence and hope back."

For Graeme Durovich, 17, of Chapel Hill, the moment of truth came at the end of the ceremony during the singing of the national anthem.

"I was just filled, bursting with joy," she said. "I couldn't believe that it was there to see it all happen. That was the first time in a very long time that it felt good to me to be an American."

Balasubramanian noticed how the ceremony touched her students. She said they already knew how important the event was.

"I think that they understood the commitment of so many other people and the importance for not just the people of this country, but they were looking around and saying, 'Look, there's a Cana-

dian flag' and 'Look, the BBC is here' and 'Look, there's someone wearing something that indicates they're from Bolivia,'" Balasubramanian said. "This was a way of really feeling the energy not just of their own class or within themselves."

Part of this understanding stems from the intense interest in politics the class has shown in the last two years. Last year in their current events class, the students followed the primary elections. This year they followed the campaign and the national election. Some students, including Jolly, volunteered on Obama's campaign. Many of the teenagers attended rallies, including some of Sen. John McCain's, to get a sense of the entire political arena.

"They are the most interested class I have had," Balasubramanian said. "I'd never really felt compelled to go to an inauguration until this one. That was a combination of Obama being the figure that he is and this class being as committed as they have been."

And her students appreciate her efforts to get them to Washington. Durovich, who had attended a few rallies and speeches when Obama came to Chapel Hill, said she felt thrilled at the opportunity to experience the culmination of the po-

litical experience.

"I just really wanted to go and feel the energy around me," she said. "If we'd stayed home, we probably would've gotten a better view of what was happening, but just to be there was amazing."

Their physical presence at such a historical event seemed to make a huge impression on the teenagers.

"Over and over again I was thinking, 'This is going to go down in history,'" Lie-Nielsen said. "I'm so happy to be a part of it."

In one sense the experience became a legacy. The teens realized they were living a moment that would someday be written in a history book like the ones they studied in class.

"There's not many events that you know are history while you're standing there in it," Jolly said. "There's just that feeling of awe and 'Wow, I'm actually here.' In 50 years we can go tell our grandchildren and great-grandchildren we were there."

The awe-inspiring nature of the day hasn't fully sunk in yet, Jolly said. But Balasubramanian said she thinks the event lived up to everything the group had hoped for.

"You know you say this will be something they will remember for a lifetime," she said. "And I really think that it will be."

MOVE

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new addition.

The transition from cramped offices, where some employees share offices or have their desks in hallways or closet-sized rooms, to the new space is dramatic.

In the new addition, which has three stories, many of the clerks will have their own offices with windows. Their offices, cubicles and files will be behind a counter, and access will be very limited.

As it stands now, anyone can wander through the various clerks' offices, stop by for a chat or ask a question.

"We're trying to keep things quiet so the girls can work without interruptions because right now there's a lot of interruptions," Dees said.

The files also will be more secure.

Stanford told a story of a clerk in another county noticing that a paralegal from a law firm had files from the Orange County Courthouse in his open briefcase. The clerk seized the files and returned them to Orange County, and the paralegal received a stern lecture about removing files from the courthouse, Stanford said.

At least once, a defendant who was in the courthouse for a criminal case stole a clerk's wallet, rushed to the mall and used the credit cards to make purchases before the clerk even realized what happened.

In the new addition, there will be locked doors, security cameras and panic alarms.

Outside their offices is a public atrium with

windows reaching two stories high. The afternoon sun lights up the space, making some of the marble tiles glisten.

An elevator and steps lead up to the third floor, where there are several courtrooms. That area was still closed Wednesday.

Underneath the clerk's office, on the ground floor, will be the sheriff's new office. That office is expected to make its move from across the parking lot at the end of the month.

Kempa gave a quick tour of the first-floor offices that the clerks will occupy.

"This is one of the best parts," Kempa said as she opened the door to the women's restroom. "It's nice new bathrooms that are clean instead of smelly and dirty."

With limited access to the files, both civil and criminal, there likely will be some issues that will need to be worked out.

Under the current system, attorneys could go back in the vaults and find a file for themselves. They might find they'll have to have a clerk retrieve a file for them now.

Stanford estimates that the clerk's new space will be twice the square footage of what they have now, which is spread out on two floors in the courthouse and in another building about two blocks away.

On Monday, new furniture is scheduled to arrive. Stanford hopes to have his clerks moved and working in the new area by Feb. 2. The estimates division, which is located up the street, will take a couple of months to move into the new space, he said.

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