

## **A Great Start – Day 1**

**Our intrepid cubs got off without a hitch this morning. Spirits were high and moods were positive as we pulled from the comfort of the Leesville Pride and onward to Washington DC. We made our first pit stop about 2 hours into our drive to allow for a stretch and walk around before returning to the bus for the next leg of the drive.**

**After a couple more hours on the bus, we pulled off for a short lunch break prior to making our way to the first of our Smithsonian stops at the Natural History Museum and the American History Museum. As we made our approach to DC, the students were glued to the windows as our guide leader turned our attention to the Air Force Memorial, the Pentagon, the Washington Monument, a number of national offices, not to forget the Capital. All of these views from the bus finally led us to the Smithsonian, where we unloaded in front of the National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of American History.**



**As you can see, the students had no fun on the bus ride up ☺... They could hardly contain the excitement.**



**While the Natural History Museum's Hope Diamond exhibit was off limits for the time being, it did not undermine the our Cubs' opportunities to trek through this environment of science exploration... dinosaurs, oceans, animals, rocks, and much more. Likewise, the students were**



**enchanted by the exhibit next door at the American History Museum, where they were able to see gowns worn by the First Ladies, learn interesting facts about the past US Presidents, catch glimpses of African American history, and most impressively, see the real Ruby Slippers from the Wizard of Oz.**

**This is just the very beginning of our Odyssey... next stop, the 9/11 Memorial at the Pentagon and Arlington National Cemetery.**

## **9/11 Memorials and Arlington**

**If you have never been to the Pentagon or the 9/11 Memorial, I urge you to add this visit to your travel bucket list. As we approached this massive building, the students were awe struck by the facts shared by our tour guide.... The one that stuck with them most significantly was the idea of the thousands of Pentagon windows costing about \$20,000 apiece.**



**Once past the Pentagon and in the Memorial, the students were very mindful of its importance. Every detail of this space was deliberate and intentional. It was touching to see so many of our students internalize the Memorial and reflect on its significance so earnestly and thoughtfully.**

**We then moved along to the Arlington National Cemetery. What an amazing exhibit and tribute to the fallen US Soldiers, Presidents, and Supreme Court Judges of this country. Row upon row of white marble grave stones all overlooking the entire DC cityscape; it was really a sight to behold. As we walked up to the highest points in the cemetery, learning about the residents, we rushed to the Tomb of the**



**Unknown Soldier, where we were honored to have four of our Leesville Cubs to participate in the prestigious wreath ceremony during the changing of the guards. This really was a highlight for all of us, who felt tremendous pride in this exclusive privilege.**



### **Dinner and on to the Hotel**

***If there is one thing that our chaperones have definitely earned, it is the opportunity to stop for a relaxed dinner. However, as a relaxed dinner while caring for 130 5<sup>th</sup> graders is not really in the cards, we instead all bustled down to the food court at the Pentagon Mall for a quick grab and eat dinner. The chaperones, on high alert and attentive to our students needs and whereabouts, made sure that our children got what they needed before we made our way back to the buses and on to the hotel.***

***The bus ride was quiet as the roughly 6 to 7 miles walked today managed to catch up with our group. I imagine that our students and chaperones got to their rooms, prepared for bed, and once their heads hit the pillow, they fell fast asleep with dreams inspired by thoughts of tomorrow's adventures.***