



# Constitutional Writes

The official newsletter of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

Winter 2008  
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## New Visitor Center Includes 3,000 Square Feet of Interactive Exhibits

The new visitor center at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site provides nearly 3,000 square feet of exhibit space to interpret the many stories related to the 1957 desegregation crisis at the school, the larger civil rights movements in the United States, and contemporary issues related to civil and human rights. The center's many powerful visual images, first hand accounts from the Little Rock Nine and others, historic documents, and stimulating interactive exhibits offer the visitor an opportunity to experience the quest for equality on an intimate level. The significantly larger visitor center also enables the entire staff, for the first time since the site was established, to work together onsite.

In her remarks during the formal dedication of the visitor center, National Park Service Director Mary Bomar emphasized “. . . the courage of the nine young Americans whose bravery we rightfully still celebrate here half a century later. These few did more with that chance to make this a better world than most of us could. I am humbled by the opportunity entrusted to us to protect and preserve their legacy.”

Visit Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site and see the place where history was made. Learn more about the events that challenged the citizens of this nation to debate the meaning of equal rights—a debate that continues today. Listen as the participants tell their stories about what happened at the school, and test your knowledge of your own rights under the Constitution. This is a history lesson you won't forget.

Laura A. Miller, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources

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*This exhibit is very moving and uplifting. Watching the broadcast of the commemoration made me look at life differently, and made me realize that I want to go back to college. If they [Little Rock Nine] can go to school and endure what they went through I have nothing to complain about.*

Written in Visitor Center Comment Book

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Photo by Chuck Haralson.

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

Exciting...Memorable...Inspiring...Thought-provoking. These are all words that might be used to describe the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the desegregation Central High School. The anniversary program on September 25, the dedication of the new visitor center the day before, and many events held throughout the community in 2007 all were amazing. Thanks to all the organizations that sponsored events or programs to help residents and visitors to remember and better understand the people and events of the "Little Rock desegregation crisis." Thanks to all in the community who helped promote an event, who volunteered at an event, or who supported an event through your attendance. I believe that our collective efforts reflected very well on the community. Visitors who came to Little Rock for the anniversary and those who watched the events on television were given a very positive impression of the city. Thank you!

In my welcome letter that was printed in the front of the program for the visitor center dedication, I noted that many events through history have served as stepping stones as our country continues on its journey to uphold the promises of our founders that all are equal. The ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, and the desegregation of Central High School all helped better define and advance the ideal of equality. In the past 50 years, the Little Rock Nine and the events that happened here in 1957-1958 have contributed to motivate and inspire more activism and advances in civil rights. But, the journey has not ended. More challenges lie ahead.

Watch this newsletter and our website ([www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc)) in the coming months for information about more programs and events intended to help visitors better understand the stories of Central High, the Little Rock Nine, and civil rights, and to inspire them to reflect on how they might apply lessons learned from these stories in their personal lives and communities. Upcoming programs will focus on topics such as the "Lost Year," the work of the Women's Emergency Committee, and in the future, the anniversaries of the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. Please visit us often!

R. Michael Madell, Superintendent



Members of the Little Rock Nine prepare to cut the ribbon during the dedication ceremony, September 24, 2007.

## New Visitor Center Wins Award!

The new visitor center already is receiving accolades! At its annual awards dinner on November 9, the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas presented the National Park Service (NPS) with an award for “*Outstanding New Construction in a Historic Setting*.” Superintendent Michael Madell accepted the honor on behalf of the NPS.

The award presentation recognized the NPS for achieving the goal to have the visitor center visually integrate with the surrounding residential neighborhood. The neighborhood, which retains much of the same appearance it had in the 1950s, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Central High National Historic District. A critical concern that park partners and neighbors expressed in the initial design phase of the project was that the building should “fit in” with the design of other structures in the immediate area and not try to compete architecturally with the school, itself an impressive historical and architectural landmark. The design of the visitor center respects the historical fabric and character of the neighborhood through the use of appropriate scale, building materials, and landscaping.

The National Park Service thanks the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas for this prestigious award!



Michael Davis presents Superintendent Michael Madell with the Alliance’s award. Photo courtesy of the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas.

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## Explore Exhibits With A New Junior Ranger Booklet!

Central High School National Historic Site is creating a new Junior Ranger activity booklet that corresponds with the new visitor center exhibits. The new activity booklet will give young people an opportunity to take part in the Junior Ranger program. Use clues in the exhibit to find answers to games and activities. Use the booklet as a guide to explore the interactive exhibits and learn about the past and also how you can contribute to America’s future.

As a junior ranger you will receive a junior ranger badge and a certificate of achievement and you will join an elite group of explorers.

If you are not able to visit the park, log on to [www.nps.gov/webangers](http://www.nps.gov/webangers) and become a WebRanger. A WebRanger is a Caretaker, an Adventurer, a Learner, a Seeker, and a Discoverer. WebRanger is designed for ages 6-9, 10-12, and 13 and up. You can be a WeRanger today!



# Bookstore Browsing

## Special Collector's Edition 8 Oz. Coca-Cola Bottles Commemorate the 50th Anniversary

Coca-Cola embraced the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of Central High School by producing special, limited-edition 50th anniversary Coca-Cola bottles. Coca-Cola donated bottles to each participant in the Little Rock Nine Foundation's gala dinner fundraiser. The company then donated the remainder to the NPS. The bottles are available at the visitor center and sell for \$3.00 each. Proceeds help support the interpretive and educational programs at the park.

On September 25, the park partnered with InnerCity FutureNet (ICFN) to begin sales of the commemorative bottles. ICFN is an organization designed to "reverse the trend" of neglect, abandonment, and despair among children and families currently residing in the Central High/Centennial Park Neighborhood in Little Rock.

ICFN workers, armed with enticing bottles of Coca-Cola and informative posters, made certain that visitors to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ceremony were quickly aware of the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to purchase commemorative bottles. The park divided proceeds from the day's sales with ICFN.

A limited number of commemorative Coca-Cola bottles remain and will be available in the park bookstore as long as supplies last. You also can browse our website for other bookstore selections by going to [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc) and clicking on Bookstore!



Quantia Fletcher, Park Guide

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## Renovations Begin for New Education Center!

In October workers removed the old heating and air conditioning unit from the roof of the former visitor center and replaced it with a new, energy-efficient one. This is the first step in converting the Mobil Station into the site's new Education Center. Workers also upgraded the building's security system. Watch for more renovations in the coming months!



# 2008 Ranger Programs

**January 21, 2008**

## **Celebrate the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Remember the work of Dr. King through *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* Park Rangers will read the story at 10:00 a.m. Afterward, visitors will have an opportunity to view the Emmy-nominated film *Our Friend Martin*.

**February 18, 2008**

## **Daisy Bates Day Holiday**

Park Rangers will commemorate the legacy of Civil Rights leader Daisy L. Gatson Bates. Watch for updates on our website - [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc).

**February 2008**

## **"Reel" Civil Rights Film Festival**

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, in partnership with Market Street Cinema and the Ozark Foothills Film Festival, will present the 2nd Annual "Reel Civil Rights Film Festival" at Market Street Cinema, located at 1521 Merrill Drive, Little Rock. Feature films include: *The Story of Ruby Bridges*; *Journey to Little Rock: The Untold Story of Minnijean Brown Trickey* and more! Stay tuned for updates on our website - [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc)

**April 21-27, 2008**

## **National Park Week and Bike with a Ranger**

Ranger-led Bike Tour in celebration of National Park Week. Rangers will lead an approximately 6 mile bike tour of various sites related to the 1957 crisis at Central High School. Some of the sites on the tour include the L.C. and Daisy Bates Home National Historic Landmark, the Terry Mansion (Decorative Arts Museum), Governor's Mansion, and State Capitol. Space is limited. Please sign up by calling 501 -374- 1957.

**April 26, 2008**

## **Earth Day Celebration**

Celebrate Earth Day 2008 and learn more about global climate change and how we can use the same personal commitment to ensuring equal rights for all to protect our world from environmental damage.

**May 15, 2008**

## **Commemorate the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision**

Join Park Rangers and learn how the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision impacted the Civil Rights Movement. A curriculum-based lesson plan about the *Brown v. Board* Supreme Court case titled, "You're the Justice! A Landmark Case in Supreme Court History" is available for educators. Other lesson plans and curriculum materials are available at the visitor center or can be downloaded online at [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc).

**July 17, 2008**

## **Junior Ranger Rally**

Join park rangers from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at the visitor center on a Scavenger Hunt to learn about the Little Rock Nine and the 1957 crisis and have an opportunity to become Junior Rangers.

Join your friendly park rangers for fun and exciting events!  
From Left: Nichole McHenry (from *Brown v. Board NHS*), Crystal Mercer, Alyssa Warrick, Quantia Fletcher, Julie Jackson, and Christian Davis.



# Notes From The Visitor Center Dedication Ceremony

Visitors from around the world came to Little Rock to experience the citywide events related to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Staff at the historic site had the opportunity to interact with visitors from Germany, Amsterdam, Canada, Sweden, Africa, France, and across the United States. More than 2000 people attended the dedication ceremony.

Among the crowd were many dignitaries including Chris McNair (father of Denise McNair who was killed in the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham), Simeon Wright (cousin of Emmett Till), Ruby Bridges (who integrated an elementary school in New Orleans in 1960), Susan Eisenhower, and many others.

It was quite a moving experience to watch the Little Rock Nine escorted onstage by current members of the U.S. Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. It was great to see the gender and ethnic diversity among the soldiers, something that was not a reality in 1957. The beautiful voices of Lawrence Hamilton and Philander Smith Select and the Freedom Singers radiated the emotions of the Civil Rights Movement through song.

It was also an honor to have Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, NPS Director Mary Bomar, Congressman Vic Snyder, Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor, Mayor Mark Stodola, Nikki Giovanni, and Congressman John Lewis participating. They all reminded us of the importance and magnitude of the events of the 1957 crisis and what it means to us today.

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*If not us, then who? If not now, then when?*

John Lewis

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Elizabeth Eckford is escorted onto the stage by a current 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division soldier from Ft. Campbell, KY.



Congressman John Lewis prepares to speak as Senator Pryor, Dr. Terrence Roberts, Secretary Kempthorne, Senator Lincoln, and Elizabeth Eckford applaud.

Members of the Little Rock Nine officially cut the ribbon at the end of the dedication ceremony. Photo by Cordell Anderson.



Current student body president of Central, Cyrus Bahrassa, delivered a refreshing and youthful account of life at Central High 50 years later, yet cautioned us that there is more work to be done. Overall, the dedication ceremony was very powerful and poignant. Many thanks to the program participants and all the people who came out to be a part of history.

Following the dedication ceremony visitors had the chance to view the exhibits for the first time. The first person to sign the guest book was a 7 year old Little Rock resident! Other comments about the event included:

“I am honored and humbled to be in the presence of the Little Rock Nine today as the nation and the world watches yet again...their strength and courage. This has been a very moving experience for me. It is my hope that every American will take the opportunity to visit this beautiful place...”

For more coverage on the Visitor Center dedication ceremony log onto [www.nps.gov/chsc](http://www.nps.gov/chsc).

# Education Corner

On December 4th Central High School National Historic Site presented an Electronic Field Trip (EFT) called *Commemorating Courage: The Nine Who Made a Difference*. This Electronic Field Trip was presented in partnership with Ball State University and the National Park Foundation. More than 50,000 students across the nation and from four countries were able to view the presentation from their classrooms via the internet or through a satellite broadcast.



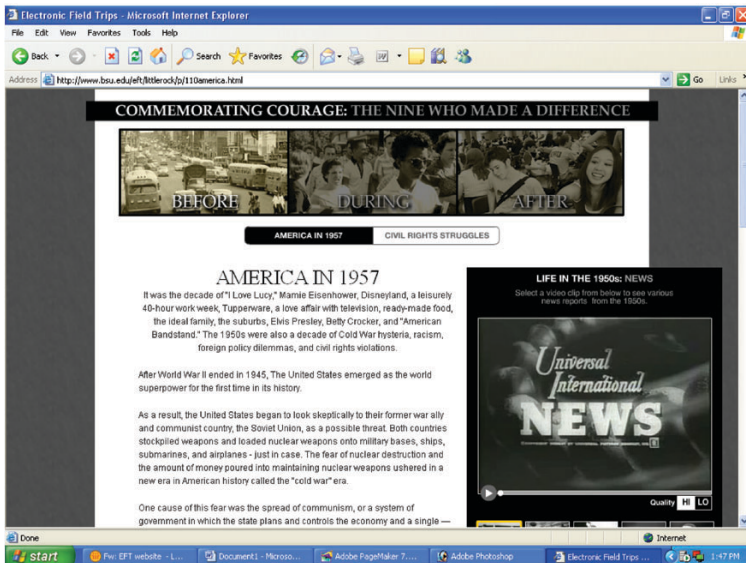
The EFT has several components to it besides the broadcast. Teachers and students can log on to the EFT website ([www.bsu.edu/eff](http://www.bsu.edu/eff)) to participate in interactive games and activities and view “webisodes.” The webisodes provide educational content in an entertaining way to prepare the students to participate in the interactive broadcast. Teachers will find peer- tested lesson plans that contain tips, videos and other documents, and that are aligned with national curriculum standards.

The live broadcast was the culminating element of the EFT experience. Multiple cameras were set up around Central High School National Historic Site to allow for a more in-depth opportunity to understand the stories and issues surrounding the events of the 1957 desegregation crisis. Students had the opportunity to call-in or post questions during the 60-minute show. Subject matter experts were on - hand to answer additional questions in real time. Check the Ball State University website to view the webisodes and learn from the interactive lessons.

The Electronic Field Trip is just one of the many technological advances that will be introduced in the coming months. Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site will be able to regularly offer dis-

tance learning connections to schools throughout the country. The site’s distance learning cart is ready to serve students with ranger-led programs that support national standards. Contact the Education Specialist directly at 501-396-3012 to learn more about distance learning and schedule your distance learning session.

Amy Garrett, Education Specialist



Sample of Electronic Field Trip website.

## New Faces

Robert (Rob) McKelvey became the first Facility Manager of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in August 2007. He started working for the National Park Service (NPS) in 1985 as a seasonal working in maintenance for Hot Springs National Park. He then worked a couple of seasonal appointments in the Resource Management Division as a sawyer and firefighter, and worked to monitor and implement control measures for Southern Pine Beetle infestation in the park. In 1987, he was hired into a permanent position and worked his way up in the maintenance division at the park.

Before leaving Hot Springs to become the Facility Manger at Central High School National Historic Site, he had become the primary Incident Commander, Engine Boss, and Parks Fire Coordinator, managing all aspects of the fire/prescribed burn programs at Hot Springs. He played a primary role in planning and implementing a controlled burn program which resulted in the park's first prescribed fire in more than 20 years. As the new Facility Manager at the site, Rob is looking forward to the new challenges of building a quality maintenance program and making our grounds and facilities among the best in the NPS.



Superintendent Madell presents Rob McKelvey with a STAR Award for his efforts to help open the new visitor center.

## Volunteers in Action!



The historic site staff would like to thank all the wonderful volunteers who helped make the Visitor Center dedication ceremony a great success! Organizations like City Year, the Black Firefighters Association, UALR Public History Program, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Little Rock School District, National Association of Social Workers, and many generous individuals donated their time and talents to making the event a great success.



Volunteers and staff participate in a briefing meeting the night before the dedication ceremony.



Volunteers helped keep the "Green Room" operational before and during the ceremony.

Are you interested in volunteering? We are looking for volunteers in the following areas: **Writing, Interpretation and Educational Programs, Research, Photography and Videography, and Landscaping.**

Volunteering is a great way to be a part of the meaningful and exciting programs at the historic site! For more information, please contact Spirit Trickey-Rowan at 501-374-1957 or [spirit\\_trickey@nps.gov](mailto:spirit_trickey@nps.gov).



# Check out more 50th Anniversary photos!



Volunteer Emcee Travis "Tre Day" Rowan prepares for the dedication ceremony. NPS photo.

Above: Governor Mike Beebe welcomes everyone to the 50th Anniversary ceremony, September 25, 2007.

Right: The Little Rock Nine with NPS Director Mary Bomar, Congressman John Lewis, and Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne after the dedication ceremony, Sept. 24, 2007. Both Photos by Tami Heilemann.



Left: SNCC's Freedom Singers perform during the dedication ceremony. Right: KATV broadcasts live from the 50th Anniversary events with Secretary Kempthorne. Photos by Tami Heilemann.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Little Rock Central High School  
National Historic Site  
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Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

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## EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the  
Interior

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

**Editor**  
Taronia Armstrong  
Park Ranger

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Email: [chsc\\_visitor\\_center@nps.gov](mailto:chsc_visitor_center@nps.gov)

## New Tours!

Join park rangers for regularly scheduled tours of Central High School. Now you can tour the school, even if you do not have a reservation. Tours are offered on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday during the school year at 9:15 a.m. and again at 1:00 p.m. The tour lasts approximately 30 minutes.

Contact the site at 501-374-1957 for more information.

Park rangers are available to give tours of the visitor center exhibits, commemorative garden and the exterior of Central High School. Off-site visits for classes or groups can be arranged as well.

The new visitor center features interactive exhibits, audio/visual programs, and a bookstore with a wide selection of educational materials.

Contact a park ranger for more information on program topics and scheduled events. Reservations are required for tours and can be made by calling the park at (501) 374-1957.