

ARTICLES

Indexing project youth log 6,159 names

Mesa young men, young women gain testimony of family history

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Brenton Smith, who indexed more than 1,000 names in seven weeks, worked on project at night with the help of his mother.

Photo by Scott P. Adair

When the Laurels of the Hampton Ward, Mesa Arizona Skyline Stake, agreed to an indexing challenge issued by the priests in their ward, they thought they'd probably get a few hundred names done.

But as the seven-week challenge ended April 4, the youth were excited and amazed at the numbers: The priests had indexed 3,370 names and the laurels had done 2,789 names, for a total of 6,159 names.

And counting what their adult leaders had done in the same amount of time, the total was brought up to 31,394.

Bishop Aaron Bazzell said he was very pleased with the work that was done.

"They have felt the Spirit of Elijah through this indexing project," he said. "It's been such a good thing."

According to the Church's Web site at www.familysearchindexing.org, FamilySearch Indexing is a program that uses the work of thousands of volunteers

to extract family history information from digital images of historical documents to create searchable indexes that assist everyone in finding their ancestors.

The youth have seen blessings in their lives as they participated in this service.

"This indexing challenge has been a great strength to me," said 17-year-old Holden Norton. "Indexing becomes easier and easier every time you do it. You just have to persevere. The Spirit comes strong when you do it and you know you are doing the Lord's work."

Young Men President Phil Shumway said it was the bishop's idea to get the youth involved in indexing. Together they helped the five priests in the quorum get signed up and learn how to do it; and since then they've been doing it on their own time.

"They're finding time after school, on weekends, after homework and during spring break," he said. "They've found that it's so easy, whether you have five or 15 minutes, or an hour, you can do some names."

Brenton Smith, 17, who indexed more than 1,000 names, said he's busy with many school activities but enjoyed doing the indexing at home with help from his mother.

"I love it because it gave me time to spend with my mother," he said. "It was fun because we were able to talk about a lot of things."

Young Women President Christine McLaws said the Laurels also got into the project.

"At first, I think we all thought that maybe we could do a few hundred names, but soon we were into the thousands," she said. "They've constantly been working on names; it's just amazing how far we've come and now they know it's something that they can do."

She, too, knows how busy the young women are, but said it's wonderful to see them making time to do the work. "It is such a great service," she said.

Along the way the youth have gained a better understanding of the importance and purpose of family history work and that all of it leads to doing temple work for ancestors.

"It's been a great experience helping these families come together," said Kristen Reid, 16.

"I feel that by doing this we are helping temple work along," said Aleece McLaws, 17, who attends the Mesa Arizona Temple weekly with a friend to do baptisms for the dead. "It has made my temple



From left, Sarah Blomquist, Robert Bamrick and Michelle McCleve work on indexing names online at www.familysearchindexing.org.

Photo by Scott P. Adair

experiences that much more meaningful. I know those on the other side are grateful that their work is getting done."

She said she received answers to her prayers when she was indexing handwritten names that at first seemed barely legible but would become clear. "Sometimes they are difficult to read," she said, "but I would say a prayer and it really did help."

The challenge had dinner riding on it and since the young men ended up doing more names, they were treated to a steak dinner at the meetinghouse on April 9.

But winning hasn't turned out to be the most important thing.

Brother Shumway said that he thinks the competition got the youth motivated, but then they caught the spirit of the work. "They realize it's just important to get the work done," he said.