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GOING BEYOND THE NAMES

This teenager taught her high school class about family history and why it's cool to learn about our ancestors.

By **Richard M. Romney**
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Grace W., 15, of Alabama, USA, loves family history. So she was delighted when, on vacation, she was able to visit the Church's Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. Little did she know that her visit to the library would later become the subject of a report at school.

"At the end of the year, my English teacher gave us an assignment to do a creative report on a subject of our choosing," Grace explains. Family history immediately popped into her head.

She remembered that her interest in family history began when ward leaders challenged each of the youth to bring a family name to the temple for baptisms for the dead. But Grace went beyond just finding names. "I think it's really cool that you can learn where your ancestors are from, what they've done, things like that," she says. "And then to be able to offer them the opportunity to receive baptism and confirmation is incredible!"

Grace was fascinated with old family photos, so she began by gathering some from a variety of sources—parents and grandparents, family history sites, and scrapbooks. She decided she would project family photos onto a screen as a video background during her oral report. The final report included:

- Research that shows 60 percent of Americans are interested in family history.
- A quote from President Russell M. Nelson: "People throughout the world, once little concerned with family history, now search for the roots of their ancestral heritage using technologies unavailable a century ago."¹
- Her personal experience visiting the Family History Library, plus an invitation to visit it someday.
- Information about FamilySearch.org and the resources and information available there, with an invitation to go online and discover something about your ancestry.

"I listed a lot of websites you could use, where all you have to do is type in your name, and it will help you get started," she said. She talked about how family history helped her in her history class too. "By knowing where your ancestors lived, you can see how history affected them."

The report went well. "A lot of my classmates thought it was cool that you could figure out who your ancestors were, what kinds of jobs they had, or who you can link to, like fifth cousins," she says. Several classmates expressed interest in learning more, and so did her teacher.

"At first, I was afraid people would think that family history is complicated or boring," Grace says. "But I found out we can help other people see that family history isn't a mystery," she says. "And it's a way to let them know a little bit about the Church too." **NE**

NOTE

1. Russell M. Nelson, "Thus Shall My Church Be Called," Apr. 1990 general conference (*Ensign*, May 1990, 17).