



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERNEST CHAN, ADAM BARNES,
JOSHUA MEYER, AND JUSTIN BOWEN

LEADING OUT on Family History

Texan teens felt the *spirit of Elijah* when they helped plan, present, and participate in a *regional family history conference*.

By Judie Rawlin and Ramona Siddoway

What would you prefer: enjoying a day at the beach with friends or going to a family history conference? Most teens would choose the beach, but Sierra Y., 17, chose to participate in a family history conference instead. She and other youth from Texas, USA, discovered that family history is not only uplifting but also fun and exciting.

Sierra posted an Instagram image that said: “Fall in Love with Your Family Tree” to encourage others to come to the conference. She says the conference motivated her to find ancestors’ names and do their temple work. “The conference had a wonderful spirit about it the whole time,” Sierra says. Other youth were asked not only to text and tweet but also to teach and train conference goers on how to use technology with family history. They participated in 55 classes and worked in the “Discovery Zone,” a room filled with computers where they provided hands-on help with technology.

Youth in the Lead

At first, some youth presenters had no idea what a family history conference was, but they, along with other youth presenters, soon learned and were inspired with



ideas of how to teach and share their technology skills with the older generation. They embraced the opportunity to be involved and willingly found time in their busy schedules to serve. Andrew P., 17, helped by sending emails encouraging youth to invite their friends to the conference. He says, “I learned that it is important to balance your schedule and to fulfill your assignments on time.”

Teaching Indexing Classes

Connor M., 15, and Kristin C., 16, taught a class together on indexing headstones and birth, marriage, and death records. Connor says, “I believe that everyone should do their family history because it really is a surefire way to take the adversary out of your life.” Kristin adds, “Learn how to do some sort of family history, and then share your learned skill with others.” Colter M., 17, also taught a workshop on indexing. When he was working in the Discovery Zone, he helped an older sister who came in with a CD sent over from Japan with her family tree in Japanese. “It was an amazing experience to be able to help her open the CD and view her family tree,” he says. “It was a very spiritual experience for me and the sister I was helping.”

More Than Just Indexing

Indexing is a great first step into family history (see page 16), but Coy G., 15, and Tori S., 16, taught that there’s more to learn about family history. They gave presentations using FamilySearch.org (including the new photos and stories feature) to research family history and prepare for

ordinances. Hannah L., 16, taught a class entitled “Youth Involved in and Excited about Family History.” She says, “We have been blessed with the skills and talents to be able to do family history, and it is our responsibility to give our ancestors the opportunity to receive the gospel blessings that we enjoy.”

Technology Everywhere

Attendees visited app stations where youth taught them how to use apps on their mobile devices for family history. Youth also helped design, build, and paint the set for “A Family History Mystery,” a class where attendees were given some basic information about a family and then were prompted by a series of questions to discover more. As they tweeted, texted, and posted answers, more hints were given, and at the end they traced three generations, explored a variety of primary sources, and pieced together a family story. Jeffrey S., 17, who helped with the set, says, “My favorite experience was working with adult leaders. I learned that the spirit of Elijah is strong.”

Texting, tweeting, apps, and a mystery that teaches about family heritage and leads to the temple—what more could you want? In fact, it left one young girl asking her dad, “Can we go to this next year?” **NE**

Judie Rawlin and Ramona Siddoway live in Texas, USA.



THESE ARE YOUR DAYS

“These are your days. You were born in a time of temples and technology. These are your days to more fully turn your hearts to your fathers and bring these saving ordinances to millions within our families. These are your days to prepare for the Second Coming of the Savior.”

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Find Our Cousins,” address at RootsTech conference, Feb. 8, 2014; lds.org/prophets-and-apostles/unto-all-the-world/find-our-cousins.