

Funding woes threaten youths' D.C. trip

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BY DAN ROZEK AND ROSALIND ROSSI STAFF REPORTERS

Earning an invitation to a national history competition may have been the easy part for five eighth-graders from Daniel Boone Elementary School, who worked for nearly four months to create a 10-minute video documentary on Wrigley Field.

Finding the money to send the North Side students and their video to the Washington, D.C., area next month for a National History Day contest may be a lot harder.

Boone school officials said they don't have the \$5,400 it will take to pay for the students and their chaperones to travel to College Park, Md., for the five-day national competition.

"We don't have the funds and it will be a burden for the parents," said Boone Principal Karen Carlson, who has launched an impromptu fund-raising campaign in an effort to quickly come up with the money needed to pay for the trip. She's contacted Chicago Board of Education officials and even sent a letter to Mayor Daley, asking for help in raising money.

The students, who used a borrowed camera to create the video documentary, said they are keeping their fingers crossed that they'll somehow be able to make the trip.

"It would be a big disappointment if we can't go. Being invited is an amazing honor," said 13-year-old Jeff Havey, one of the five boys on the team who crafted the video, titled "Wrigley Field: Lights, Camera, Reaction."

Jeff and teammates Nicholas Hansen, Matthew Colston, Imran Shahbuddin and Ryan Strong, are one of only 20 Illinois teams to be invited to attend the National History Day contest. Their video project, a history of the controversy surrounding the installation of lights at the venerable ballpark, collected honors at the Chicago History Fair and the Illinois History Exposition held earlier this month in Springfield.

That strong showing earned them an invitation to bring their video to the national competition, which runs from June 9 to 13.

"It's a really exciting thing. A lot of people don't get to go to the nationals," said Matthew, 13. Carlson approached Chicago Board of Education officials for help, but they initially rebuffed her request, saying budget restrictions prevented them from contributing. But after Chicago Sun-Times reporters made inquiries Wednesday, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan said he would like to help the school pay for the trip.

"Often, I try to help out and split costs. That's what I would like to do here," said Duncan.

Late Wednesday, Carlson said she received word from Duncan's staff that the School Board would contribute \$2,000 toward the cost of the trip.

Other contributions already have come in from Ald. Bernard Stone (50th) and U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), who each contributed \$250.

"It helps," Carlson said, adding, "We're halfway there."

Carlson also has approached Daley, sending a letter asking for help in finding individuals or corporations who might sponsor the students and chaperones on the trip--which she said would be "low-budget."

"We're really doing it cheap," she said.

The school may also receive some help from the Chicago Metro History Education Center, a privately funded organization that runs the citywide Chicago History Fair contest, which sometimes contributes funds to help students travel to state or national contests.

"It can be a problem" for some students, said Holly Campbell-Smith, an official with the center. Carlson and other faculty members say the students deserve a chance to attend the national contest and show their video, which they shot on their own outside of school, interviewing neighbors and activists about the impact of the Chicago Cubs' 1988 decision to install lights at Wrigley Field.

"It's a huge deal. They're real excited," said Eddie Cesario, the boys' history teacher and adviser on the project.

Contributions can be made by contacting Boone Principal Karen Carlson at (773) 534-2160.