

A history lesson

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By Zoya Tereshkova



James Hunn of Danville, a sergeant with the 12th U.S. Colored Troops re-enactors at Camp Nelson, made a presentation Friday to Warner Elementary students on how heavy artillery units operated during the Civil War.

Besides the artillery unit, there was also a display that showed the soldiers' camp life. It was run by Harold Oney and Wayne Fielder, members of the 7th Kentucky Volunteer Infantry.

Oney, of Nicholasville, showed the children how to load a rifle. He also explained in detail what everyday camp life looked like for soldiers back in the 19th century.

"We want to give them more than they can read in the textbook," he said.

Michael Crutcher of Jessamine County, also a member of the 12th U.S. Colored Troops, said that the presentation was designed to give children a sense of what their ancestors went through during the Civil War.

"They might know the facts and dates from their textbooks, but here they can get a feel of how it really was," he said.

Crutcher said he found out through a research that his great-great-great-grandfather had served at Camp Nelson during the war.

"We're becoming better known in the area," he said. "There is more and more interest."

Camp Nelson, which was a supply depot and recruiting camp for the Union Army during the war with the Confederate states, was one of the largest recruiting posts in the country for African-American soldiers. Most of the soldiers were men who gained their freedom from slavery in exchange for serving in the federal army. Many had escaped from slave holders in the South, and Camp Nelson became a refugee camp for them and their families.