

CNL Sponsors Field Trip

TSN FEATURE STORY

Kermit, Rowlf, Big Bird and Miss Piggy. Yeah, that's right ... I bet you know exactly who I'm talking about. I also bet that just thinking about this perfectly peculiar group of friends brings a smile to your face. But what I bet you don't know, is that the performer inside of Big Bird's bright yellow suit extends his right hand over his head to operate the head and neck of the puppet. Imagine having to walk around all day with your right arm straight up in the air – whew! And the only way “Bird” sees where he's going is by looking at a small video monitor strapped around his waist. “Keeeeeewl,” responded my tour-mates to the guide, as she led us around the Smithsonian's Traveling exhibition of *Jim Henson's Fantastic World* at the Orange County Regional History Center located right here in downtown Orlando.

CNL invited twenty children from the Frontline Outreach After-School Program to go on a field trip using donated tickets from the History Center and TSN tagged along. Elizabeth Monge, CNL's Corporate Communications & Brand Coordinator, set the whole thing up ... and if bright, eager eyes and questions galore are positive indicators, then the controlled mayhem was simply *Fragglicious!*

Frontline Outreach provides early childhood education, after-school programs, and leadership programs for children. Their model of urban early childhood education and character development promotes leadership skills and has been a positive influence in our schools, churches, and the city. CNL also participates in Frontline's Mentor Program.

The History Center makes learning fun for all ages. Our band-of-characters made its way through four floors of Florida history: the Seminole Wars and early pioneers (including a playhouse-sized log cabin we could sit in); cowboys and cattle ranchers; the citrus industry (you could actually smell orange blossoms) and the Orlando Air Base; a sinkhole you could stand in and the scary alligator hiding under a nearby pond-frond drew tears from our littlest tyke and jeers from those who knew better. The children also enjoyed learning about Orlando's first and original courtroom built in 1927 and the Indian oyster-shell midden (i.e.: garbage dump, go figure!). Our two-hour tour only scratched the surface of all the center offers, but as our group bid happy good-byes, I overheard “Did' ja see that big claw hanging from the ceiling? She said it was from a giant sloth. What's a sloth?”

As it began, so shall it end as the Muppets have proven that no matter how crazy and out of control things get, wonderful things can happen if you follow your tour guide, er ah, dream ... and have a frog around to save the day!