

Coast Views Magazine
June issue
Spotlight on Education
by Kelly Sunshine

The Wilkinson School is small by design, but it carries a big mission for its students. The goal is to combine traditional classroom learning with enriching and educational experiences in a “school without walls”. One way this is accomplished is to make a two-week intensive studies trip part of the regular curriculum. Each year the students begin by studying in depth, a region of the United States, Europe, or Mexico. Then, in the spring, they travel to that region to experience it for themselves. There the cultures, geography, and history come alive resulting in a level of understanding and awareness that cannot be duplicated in the classroom.

Last month, Wilkinson students traveled to the American Southwest. Through much of the journey, the group was accompanied by a native Hopi Indian couple that has become personal friends of Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson. Although the itinerary called for numerous stops to witness the grand landscape of Arizona and New Mexico, and to observe the ancient ways of the native people, the travelers found themselves part of a unique event that was not on the schedule. Upon their arrival at the Hopi Reservation, they discovered that the Hopi people have a special connection to Bob Marley’s family and the people of Jamaica. Because the school children and their chaperones were also guests at the reservation, they were invited to the personal reggae concert given by Damien and Steven Marley. The northern California group who journeyed by bus to see all that they could see, were spontaneously treated to Jamaican island music, and danced under the stars in the midst of the majestic desert landscape with Native American Indians.

When the students returned to school, they had plenty of stories to tell, but one in particular remained fresh in their minds and hearts. They learned from personal experience what no textbook can ever teach. When asked about that special, unexpected evening in New Mexico, Ed Wilkinson said it was truly “a meeting of the cultures in the land of enchantment”.