

Stephanie Nelson

Bravery is defined as facing challenges despite knowing the obstacles ahead and moving forward regardless of fear. Our forefathers embodied this idea and sought to empower the American colonists to combat the tyrannical and unjust actions of King George III. They pledged their freedom, their rights, and their lives by signing the Declaration of Independence. I am proud to be a part of an organization that continues to honor the sacrifices of these valiant and stalwart men, one of them being my ancestor, Thomas Nelson, Jr. Honoring this part of American history is important to me because I recognize the vital sacrifices these men made to ensure our future freedoms. Realizing this segment of American history is essential because we need to understand the risks these men took. Additionally, it reminds us not to take anything for granted and to count the blessings we have to be a free and democratic nation. We are fortunate to live in the country we do, and that would not have been possible without their valor and resolve. These men were fighting for our rights so that people could live free and equal. We have come so far as a nation, and it is vital to reflect on what we have accomplished and what we need to learn from our past.

As a descendant, I believe it is imperative to keep this part of American history alive. In order to accomplish this, I value being an active member in DSDI and desire to encourage others to become involved in order to keep this rich history in the forefront of people's minds. I serve as the Historian on the Board of Governors, have recently taken on Co-Merchandise Chair, have helped initiate the Wreath Committee with the aid of Nancy Wark (President General) and Sheryl Albert (North Carolina Governor). Recently, I assumed the role of Virginia Governor. One of my missions through these roles is to get more members active and recruit descendants. As Governor of Virginia, my vision is to generate more consistent activities exploring the rich history in the state. For many, it figuratively exists in people's backyards. I have future plans of organizing trips to the Roswell ruins in Gloucester, solidifying the partnership we have with St. John's Church in Richmond, visiting historical sites such as Menokin and Yorktown, and garnering excitement and renewed interest in serving and encouraging a more active role among members. This vision and mission are extremely important to me. I am honored to continue to serve the society and want to recognize this part of American history through my roles in DSDI.

My life pursuit of happiness is to educate students, specifically middle school students. It is not an easy task nor is it lucrative, but it is my calling and my passion. I get the privilege of empowering the youngest future citizens of our world to make integral changes for the future. A significant part of this is teaching students about our country's history, starting with the American Revolution. I want them to recognize all we have as a country is a result of the sacrifices of the men and women who have gone before us. I am lucky to teach in an

area close to where my ancestor resided: Yorktown, Virginia. My sixth-grade students study the Revolutionary War as a part of the curriculum, and I am always proud to share my roots of being related to a Signer. It assists in getting students engaged and interested in this part of American history. I enjoy collaborating with our two history teachers and setting up experiences where students get to explore the Revolution and its impact. In past years, we have taken trips to the Revolutionary War Museum in Yorktown.

In final reflection, our Signers were unwavering in their mission to ensure Americans had a voice in our government. I am honored and feel a deep responsibility to help raise our future generation to be active citizens of our country, and I consider this to be the most important work I do as an educator. I share this information to illustrate my determination in empowering fellow citizens, more specifically the future of our country. I am pursuing my doctorate in reading education because I want to inspire students to be vigilant absorbers of information and to exercise critical thinking skills. Reading is an important component that intelligent, observant, and diligent people possess, and it is not something that has been extended to all people in the history of our country. I want to become a reading specialist so that I can integrate reading material related to the American Revolution that students can comprehend. An educated society is an important one. Someone once stated that an uneducated and illiterate society is easier to control. To break away from these chains, I desire to teach students the basic and essential life skills—something our ancestors would have wanted. Part of this development is helping students learn from our country's past. Education is the crux of our future success, and I will continue to work diligently to help my students comprehend the important history of the American Revolution and the men who gave so much to make the United States a great nation.