

## Talahi Hosts History Tableaux

5.25.05

Stock still and silent, Sadie Olson is learning history the hard way – as a costumed performer in a tableau that depicts important women of the American Revolution.

Her Betsy Ross character is flanked by Abigail Adams, Martha Washington and Molly Pitcher. A description on a nearby music stand attests to each woman's contribution to independence. At this hour a steady stream of sixth-graders are filing by, separated from the performers by a lengths of plastic chain.

"It's really hard not to laugh," Olson said. "I look at my flag so I won't."

Together, Olson, Chandra Brown (Adams), Katlyn Ambrosch (Washington) and Laura Koester (Pitcher) create what the French call a *tableau vivant*, a group of people attractively arranged in a dramatic scene. Their tableau is one of 29 on display May 25 and May 26 at Talahi Elementary, St. Cloud.

Teachers Daniel Schaefer, Vicky Olston-Smith, Sara Eibes and Dick Miller have worked with their students to create tableaux on four themes: the Revolution, westward expansion, early explorers and U.S. immigration. The tableaux culminate two months of study and preparation, including reading the *America's Story* textbook, creating scenery, collecting or making props and writing descriptions for each tableau.

"I think they internalize everything that they learn because not only are they learning it, they are also applying it," said Eibes.

Students from other grades view the tableaux and the read the descriptions. Parents are invited to a 6:30 p.m. May 25 celebration that includes the tableaux, patriotic songs in the gymnasium and cookies and juice in the cafeteria.

The tableau was a popular parlor entertainment in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. Women, who were the primary performers, relied on tableaux manuals to perfect their depictions of historic events and famous paintings.



Chandra Brown, Laura Koester, Katlyn Ambrosch and Sadie Olson perform a tableau about important women of the American Revolution. Their performance in Daniel Schaefer's room was one of 29 *tableaux vivants* presented by Talahi Elementary fifth-graders.



Byran Vongkhamdy plays the part of Spanish soldier battling Sir Francis Drake, who is the focus of one of the early explorers tableaux in Vicky Olston-Smith's room.