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New Junior Rangers Take The Pledge

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Eastern York School District 4th graders are sworn in as official NPS CAJO Junior Rangers at the Zim Susquehanna Heritage

In May 2016, the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office(CHBA) and Susquehanna Heritage hosted field trips for 191 fourth grade students from Eastern York School District in York County as part of the Every Kid in a Park program. These were the first-ever field trips hosted at the Zimmerman Center for Heritage, which serves as headquarters for Susquehanna Heritage and is located along the Susquehanna River just south of Wrightsville, PA. This summer, the Zimmerman Center will become the first official visitor contact station on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail (CAJO).

Students toured the Zimmerman Center, an historic 18th century house, viewed its art collection of Susquehanna River scenes, and received their CAJO and NPS Centennial passport stamps. Outside, they explored the grounds, and hiked up the hill behind the Center to Native Lands County Park, site of one of the last known settlements of the Susquehannock Indians. With a view overlooking the Susquehanna River, the students learned more about Susquehannock Indian culture and history on this part of the river, and how they came to meet Captain John Smith four hundred years ago.

In the second half of the field trip experience, the students learned how to do a field stream study in nearby Fishing Creek, a tributary to the Susquehanna River. Here, they learned about ecosystems, water quality issues, and how the health of even a small stream affects the health of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay.

The fourth graders used everything they learned that day to complete a Junior Ranger book and were sworn in as official Junior Rangers on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

The field trips were funded through the National Park Foundation's Every Kid in a Park Transportation Grants Program and a donor-advised fund from the York County Community Foundation. This CAJO field trip program exploring all three interpretive themes of the trail was developed by 2015 CAJO Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Jerry Schenck.

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