



## **The Role of Youth Conferences**

By Stuart Matheson, Hole in the Rock Foundation Board

Over the last several years the Foundation has focused on youth conferences as an important and effective means of telling the inspiring story of the Hole in the Rock pioneers. Youth conferences are hosted by the Foundation in the summer at Bluff Fort and Camp Stickie-ta-tudy in Bluff. Both the Fort and the Camp are dedicated historic sites, owned and operated by the Foundation and staffed by LDS Church Service Missionaries sponsored by the Church History Department.

Our youth conference theme is simple: “We can do hard things.” The story of the Hole in the Rock pioneers is an exciting and inspirational chapter in the LDS Church’s history. They did hard things.

Our message is also simple: this is a story of mighty miracles; a story of faith, obedience, courage, strength, perseverance, and hope. With the Lord’s help, applying these eternal principles, these pioneers did hard things and overcame their challenges in their day. This is just as applicable for us all today, but particularly for young people who face such daunting challenges in our modern world. These 19th-century pioneers came safely home – and so can we today if we seek the Lord’s help and apply those same eternal principles.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks stated in a conference address: “It is not enough to study or reenact the accomplishments of our pioneers. We need to identify the great eternal principles they applied to

achieve all they achieved for our benefit, and then apply those principles to the challenges of our day.”

Most recently the Foundation hosted a youth conference for the Phoenix Arizona North Stake. Approximately 120 youth and 40 leaders and staff participated in the 4-day event. The focus was presenting this simple message through activities at the Camp, the Fort, and elsewhere. Our youth conferences provide an unusual combination of an inspiring story, a well-developed venue, fun and sober activities, and the opportunity to walk on sacred ground – literally in the same footsteps the pioneers took on their journey to fulfill their call to the San Juan Mission.

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## Renovation Complete:

Kumen Jones home becomes entertainment center



*Early 1900s*



The original Kumen Jones log cabin was located in the northwest corner of the Fort. Near the end of the 19th century, The Jones constructed an elegant stone home adjacent to their original cabin. Fire destroyed the home in 1975.

Within the renovated Jones home is a designated room to tell the story of Kumen, Mary and Lydia Jones. This enclosed room will function like one of the cabins. It will house photos, furniture of the era and a history of the Jones family. The stained-glass windows, within the room were also created by one the Buff Fort Missionaries.



A schedule for the Friday Night at the Fort has been created. The events will be performed on the new stage of the Kumen Jones home. To create a better ambience, stage lights and a comprehensive sound system have been installed.

A new “bowery” has been built next to the Kumen Jones home. Families can sit under the bowery and watch productions on the stage. It is hoped people will bring their families and friends to the Bluff Fort and enjoy the talents of the area.



*New Bowery*

## *“Friday Night at the Fort”*

**April 26-August 23, 2019**

550 Black Locust, Bluff, UT. 7:00 p.m

*Free amazing talent, & delicious ice cream!*



- April 26 **“Hold that Note”** Incredible performing young talent!
- May 10 Award-winning **San Juan High band & choir!**
- May 17 **The Grayson Girls**, a favorite at the Fort!
- May 24 **The Sevy family** with crazy talent, from St. George!
- June 7 **Mary Kaye**, renown Western singer from Texas, Escalante!
- June 21 **Clive Romney**, The Utah State Folklorist!
- July 12 **Alan, Leonie Hunt**, from Australia!
- July 26 **Denver, Kristen Smith**, new Blanding talent!
- Aug. 9 **Russell Pincock & Patricia Kudzia**, renown cellists!
- Aug 23 **Craig Crippen**, an amazing voice and performer!

*An amazing schedule, much fun to be had in Bluff!*

### **Bluff Fort Docents**

Docent: do-cent, doh-suh nt: A person who is a knowledgeable guide, especially one who conducts visitors through a museum and delivers a commentary on the exhibitions.



*Sevy family on Jones Stage*

*Schedule subject to change.  
See Bluff Fort/Hole in the Rock  
Pioneers on **Facebook** for updates.*

Local volunteers at Bluff Fort are referred to as docents. They are essential to the success of the Fort. This year we have approximately 25 local volunteer/docents. At least ten are new this year. Training was held on March 4 to orient new docents and reinforce knowledge and procedures for returning, experienced docents. Local volunteers are often knowledgeable regarding San Juan County geography and prove to be very helpful when visitors have questions about the area. They also “man the fort” when Church Service Missionaries go on outings and excursions to familiarize themselves with the area. Many of our docents have served for several years and continue to serve at the Fort. They are appreciated! The Board of Directors of the Hole in the Rock Foundation express our gratitude for the service the docents provide.

## Surprise Visit!

### Elder Dieter F and Harriet Uchtdorf Call at Bluff Fort



Elder Dieter F. and Sister Harriet Uchtdorf visited Bluff Fort in December. They had been attending a Conference in Farmington, NM. They made their way through Monument Valley and came to visit Bluff Fort. They watched the movie and had a great time visiting with the Church Service missionaries at the Fort. Elder Uchtdorf dazzled the missionaries with his John Wayne impersonation before leaving. He dropped the Fort a letter after leaving and told them how delighted he was to have visited with them and what a great job they were doing serving at Bluff Fort Visitor Center.

“When I walked into the visitor center and saw Elder Uchtdorf standing there, it really shocked me to see him up so close! He is an amazing man and when I felt his spirit, I kind of teared up.”

— Cindy Embleton



# 1820



## 200!

JENS NIELSON Descendants!!

Jens 's 200th birthday will be next April 25th (2020)! We invite every one who can possibly visit Bluff Fort during 2020 to pay honor and respect to Jens, his wives and children. There will be a special autograph book for each of you to sign. Please spread the word through social media and let's make this a great year for our ancestors!

Come singly, come as families but plan to come

# 2020

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Activities are varied, and include ropes (or challenge) courses, firesides with leaders, exploring, service projects, games (volleyball, tetherball, horseshoes, monkey bridges, etc.), pioneer role playing, square dances, and perhaps the most inspiring – standing at the bottom of San Juan Hill, looking up, and realizing the difficulty of getting horses and wagons up that incline – and then hiking it.

We remember and teach about who these pioneers were and what they did, taking to heart the suggestion of Elder Steven E. Snow, the LDS Church historian, who remarked that "...God desires us to remember His words, His works, and the works of His people." These pioneers were His people, and they accomplished great works. These young people are His people, too, and can accomplish great works.

We continue to encourage youth groups to come, to see, to experience, and to learn first-hand this wonderful story.