

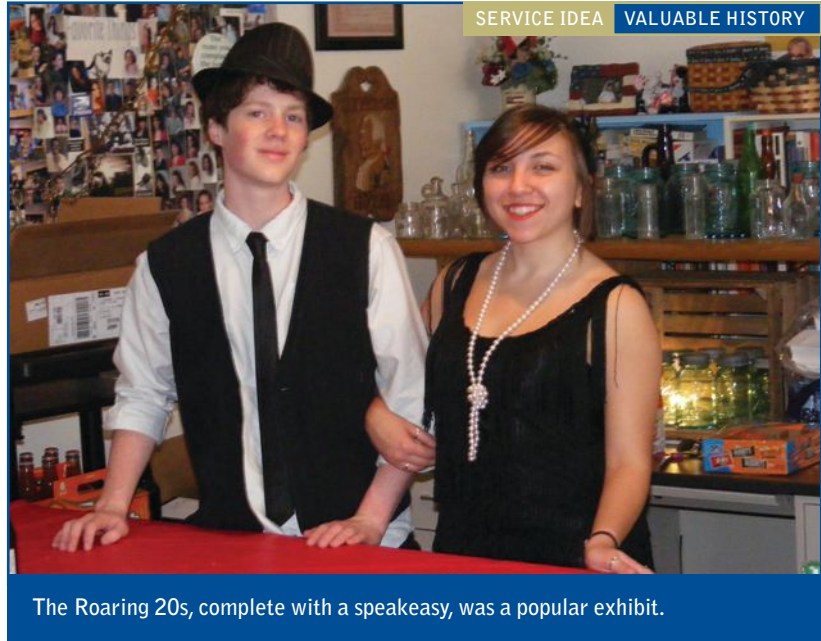
## Lions Give Students a History Lesson

It looked like National History Day would be declared one more loss to the economic downturn when the Heritage Center in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, ended the event's sponsorship in several counties. But Wendy Toole, a former teacher who had voluntarily coordinated NHD activities for several years, refused to let the program fade away.

"How valuable is history?" she reasoned. "Imagine students not mandated to study history. It happens. Now imagine these same students as politicians, economists or teachers." She turned to the East Petersburg Lions Club, whose 14 members she knew well because her father, Clyde Pearson, is one of them. Pearson and Toole also reached out to other clubs in District 14-D by making presentations at meetings. "My father always said that when faced with a brick wall, I will find a way to break it down!" Toole jokes.

National History Day is more than one single day. It's a year-long educational program involving students throughout the country. "In essence," explains Toole, "it's a 'science fair' for history, in which students from the 6th through 12th grades participate. It requires college-caliber research culminating in a competition of presentations, Web sites, performances, documentaries, exhibits and papers." Students move through different levels of competition, and in Toole's region, eight top entries in 2010 moved to the national level, with two being placed at the top.

Toole tries to keep learning about history fun and yet intriguing enough



to capture participants' imagination and stir their quest for knowledge. Exhibits have included the history of rock 'n' roll, the Gatling gun, photography in the Vietnam War, the invention of Braille and that household staple, duct tape.

Last year more than 300 students, teachers and parents from public and private schools in four Pennsylvania counties participated in National History Day. Toole spends about 1,500 hours a year planning the project, but the positive feedback she receives keeps her going. "A mother approached me and told me about her son who participated in NHD seven years ago. One of his teachers made him participate as a punishment of sorts.

"He created a project and never looked back. He found himself through

History Day. He was able to study something that interested him and follow it thoroughly. The teacher had no idea how capable he was until the project was complete. NHD awakened something in him. He's now a teacher for gifted students. NHD changed his life," Toole points out.

In addition to donating more than \$1,500 last year, 20 Lions served as monitors and judges and helped set up and tear down the exhibit areas at the local high school where the event was held. Toole intends to keep volunteering, both as an NHD coordinator and a new East Petersburg Lion. "National History Day and the Lions are a great fit!" Toole says.