

9-2018

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Recommended Citation

Atkins, Steven, "Andrews Academy students participate in Jordan archeological dig" (2018). *Lake Union Herald*. 804.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/804>

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Andrews Academy students participate in Jordan archeological dig

MICHIGAN — One of the unique features of Andrews Academy (AA) is its partnership with Andrews University (AU). Academy students can take college classes their junior or senior year, with some classes as dual credit. University professors often make presentations at the academy. This summer, seven AA students joined the AU archeological dig in Jordan at Khirbet Safra, just south of Madaba.

Each summer, AU's archeological department continues a dig at two different sites in Jordan, Tal Hisban and Khirbet Safra. They leave their hotel just before 5 a.m., before the heat of the day, and work at the site for about six hours. The students are trained to carefully excavate layers of dirt that has covered the site over the years. In the process, a lot of rocks have to be removed (because they have fallen or been disturbed over time). Pottery is recovered to help date the walls and dirt fill in an effort to retrace the history of destruction in order to understand the period of occupation. After lunch, back at the hotel, during the heat of the day, everyone joins in to wash the pottery so that on the next day it can be "read." This is where everyone is taught forms and periods, and where much of what they did at the site gains meaning.

On weekends, the students go on educational tours of Jordan to locations such as the Dead Sea and experience the greater buoyancy due to the salt in the water; the traditional site at the Jordan River where people generally believe Jesus was baptized; the fortress of Machaerus that Herod the Great had built in 30 B.C. and where John the Baptist was beheaded about 60 years later by another Herod; Dibon, where the famous Moabite stone was discovered; the Roman city of Jerash where Jesus taught and healed; the city of Gadara which was the home city of the demoniacs; and many other locations. Their first Friday evening vespers was at Mount Nebo, the location where Moses died.

The team stays in a hotel in Madaba that has a pool in which to cool off after a busy day of work. Many afternoons they go shopping in Madaba or sit and visit with old friends. One such friend is Grandpa Yusef (Joseph), a local shop owner who is greatly loved by the dig team and the academy students.

It's an amazing experience for AA students to see the sites of the Bible, which brings the stories in the Bible to life and provides deeper meaning and insight. Students return to Berrien Springs forever changed, having a deeper understanding of the Bible as well as the cultures and traditions of the Middle East. ■

Steven Atkins is Biology and Earth Science teacher at Andrews Academy.

► Top to bottom: Seven Andrews Academy students with one of their instructors, Mr. Scottie Baker, at the dig site. Delilah Drew, Andrews Academy senior, sifting through the rubble in search of pottery. The group washing pottery so that on the next day it can be "read." This is where everyone is taught forms and periods, and where much of what they did at the site gains meaning. Their first Friday evening vespers was at Mount Nebo, the location where Moses died, one of the sites they toured on weekend excursions while visiting sites in the Middle East.



Scottie Baker



Scottie Baker



Scottie Baker



Connie Gane



Scottie Baker

▲ Grandpa Yusef ("Joseph"), a local shop owner who is greatly loved by the dig team and the academy students