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## Spring Branch man promotes original American hero

By: Candace Bush, Staff

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### Wearing bi-focals, a wig, gold-buckled shoes and an authentic costume, Spring Branch resident Harry Benson visits area schools portraying one of the most famous men in history.

"He was the first Postmaster General, the first millionaire, and has his picture on more stamps than anyone besides George Washington," Benson said of his alter ego.

Benson has been keeping the spirit of Ben Franklin alive for more than 10 years. He started as a way to promote the Museum of Printing History, but now makes appearances at schools, church groups and libraries. The costume he wears was made and purchased by a museum benefactor and replaced the \$80 a day rental he once wore.

"My motto is 'Share Your Knowledge,'" Benson said. "And what better way to do that than going around to schools and talking about everything Ben did for our country. Children aren't hearing about the heroes in history any more. He is one of the original heroes, even before baseball and football players.

"Most of the children I talk to don't know that Ben only went through the second grade and got where he did through reading books. I really push reading to the children I visit."

Known as the Patron Saint of Printers, Benjamin Franklin is known for his many inventions that helped to make the United States what it is today.

Benson has been involved in the printing arena for more than 45 years, and although he is retired he is still very actively involved.

He has taught classes in printing at both the high school and college level and is on the Board of Directors at the Museum of Printing History.

"We have many things for children to do at the museum," Benson said. "They can print the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in old-time print on our machines. There is a lot about Texas and the newspaper industry at the museum also. "

When Benson, who is a Mason just like Benjamin Franklin, visits schools, he brings with him literature for the children.

"They ask questions about Benjamin Franklin and I love to answer them," Benson said. "I keep up with facts because I have a very inquiring mind and make sure I find answers to questions I don't know. It is very rewarding to see the kids faces light up when I talk about him because they know very little about one of our founding fathers."

Benson had throat surgery two years ago and is finally returning to an active schedule of promoting Benjamin Franklin and the printing industry.


"I'm back in the swing of things," Benson said.

There is no charge for Benson's appearances, but a donation to the museum is greatly appreciated.

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