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NOTE: "Armonica" is correct.

FOUNDING FATHER BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WILL VISIT FOLSOM SENIOR CENTER

You don't need to travel back in time to meet Benjamin Franklin – the famous Founding Father is coming to Folsom.

The Revolutionary-era statesman and scientist, in the person of Barry Stevens, will visit the Folsom Senior Center, 48 Natoma St., on Aug. 28 from 2 to 4 p.m. The event is free and open to everyone.

Stevens, who characterizes himself as a historical reenactor, portrays Franklin in character and in the context of his times. Though he never departs from the 18th century, he does interact with his audience and answers questions.

Every detail of Stevens' presentation is as authentic as possible. In the eight years he has interpreted Franklin, Stevens has exhaustively researched his life, even traveling to places Franklin frequented, including a favorite restaurant in Paris.

As a resident of the Washington D.C. area, Stevens has access to troves of primary resources. Even his outfits are tailor-made to 18th-century specifications, and his eyeglasses are an accurate replication of Franklin's (the good doctor invented bifocals).

Stevens didn't set out to become Ben Franklin. His interest in early American history led him in 1999 to join the First Virginia Regiment for Revolutionary War reenactments. At the group's events, he was so often addressed as Ben by the other participants, who swore he looked just like Franklin, that he began assuming the character's role.

His first enactment as Franklin was to read the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2005, at Mount Vernon, George Washington's home. Since then, he has brought Franklin to schools, organizations, events, even a 200-year-old restaurant in Virginia, and has portrayed him in films and TV shows. Most recently, he played Franklin for an upcoming episode of the Travel Channel series "Mysteries at the Museum."

Researching Franklin never gets boring. The most famous man in America at the time he lived, Franklin has a long list of accomplishments: printer, inventor (the Franklin stove, of course, the armonica, the lightning rod and an odometer, to name a few), scientist, politician, musician, postmaster, satirist and founder of the University of

Pennsylvania and the first fire department in the colonies. In fact, Stevens says, Franklin is considered the “patron saint” of fire departments.

It is that role that is bringing Stevens to Sacramento: He is performing Franklin in a movie tribute to firefighters being filmed in Elk Grove and offered to do the program in Folsom.

One article can barely scratch the surface of Benjamin Franklin. So much more is revealed by meeting “The First American” in person. “He is,” Stevens says with understatement, “ a complex and fascinating man.”

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