A group of Salem students, including (from left) Jonathan Gonzalez, Miguel Baez, Edwin Gonzalez, Olanyide Ulerio, and Jean Pierre Cardona Pichardo, spent a month exploring the area’s history for an exhibition at the National Park Service’s visitors center in Salem.

SALEM AT WORK: A group of Salem High School students spent a month this summer exploring the world of work in the city’s past, present, and future.

The result is an exhibition featuring their photography and writing on display at the National Park Service’s visitors center in Salem through Sept. 30.
The 40 students are part of the English Language Learning program at the high school, and the summer enrichment program was geared toward helping them improve their literacy and English fluency, while focusing on work and career pathways.

With a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, Salem State University collaborated with educators and community leaders from the Essex National Heritage Commission, the National Park Service, Salem Cyberspace, and the Peabody Essex Museum to offer the program.

The grant is one of several aimed at closing the achievement gap for largely poor and immigrant children in “gateway cities” across Massachusetts.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity to work with our partners to engage young people through place-based learning that focuses on the rich resources in the Essex National Heritage Area,” said Annie Harris, the heritage commission’s chief executive.

The students visited sites related to the theme of local work. They learned about the skills and knowledge that were necessary in the region’s maritime and industrial past, and explored present-day work opportunities.

Students interviewed family members and other workers, and received training in photography, writing, and exhibition preparation as they designed their own art show, “Help Wanted: Celebrating the Ingenuity, Multiculturalism and Enterprising Nature of the Citizens of Salem.”

Organizers hope that teaming Salem teachers, university-trained faculty, and community educators will help expand literacy skills in the city’s public schools and the community, as well as create a group of educators who will help colleagues improve their support of English language learners.

For more information, call 978-744-0444 or visit www.essexheritage.org.

IN A SNAP: Nature photographer Dave Burns speaks at the monthly meeting of the Photographic Society of Parker River National Wildlife Refuge at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at the preserve’s visitors center in Newburyport.

His narrated slide program features images of nature and wildlife taken during photo safaris around the world.