Washington students are top competitors in march toward State and National History Day 2017

Tacoma, WA – Green River Community College in Auburn will be the scene of a fierce humanities competition on Saturday, April 29. Hundreds of students in grades six through twelve from all over the state will compete to win in their respective categories at the 2017 Washington State History Day Competition. Winners will claim a spot in the culminating challenge, National History Day, to be held in College Park, MD, June 11-15, 2017.

National History Day is a year-long academic program that engages middle and high school students in historical research. Each year, more than half a million students choose historical topics related to a theme and conduct extensive research to prepare original papers, websites, exhibits, performances, and documentaries for entry into local, state, and national History Day competitions. The 2016–17 theme is “Taking a Stand in History.”

The Washington State Historical Society (WSHS) leads the annual process in our state, providing oversight, materials, competition rules, services and training through teachers who
are volunteer coordinators in each of eight districts. Teachers are coached in how to best incorporate the event in their schools, typically either through integrating it into their history classes or running it as an after-school club.

Students push their creativity and research skills to produce professional-quality documentaries, scholarly papers, and other representations and interpretations of historical topics. Examples of Washington students’ award winning projects can be viewed on the WSHS website (www.washingtonhistory.org/education/historyday/samples/) and WSHS’s YouTube channel. Schools and individual students often post their work to websites and YouTube as well.

Winners receive honors and prizes (think big, such as funding to produce a History Channel documentary!), but even more important, the experience can be life-changing.

“Many people are surprised that as a college student today I still frequently talk about my middle school experience with History Day, but I can't express enough how pivotal the program was for me both in my academic and personal confidence,” said Brittany Beaudoin, who competed while at Wy'East Middle School. “The knowledge gained through this program extends far beyond history, and as a student interested in astrophysics and computer science I still use the skills I developed while studying the innovation of Sesame Street for my NHD project ... I am so thankful to have had such a unique opportunity … and hope the same opportunity remains open for years to come.”

Washington students do well at the national level year after year, reflecting positively on WSHS and the team of dedicated teachers, organizers and volunteers who work with the students and set up the local, regional, and state competitions. In 2012, Washington students took both first and second place in the nation. As a result of her historical paper and second place win, Mount Spokane High School student Natalie Pilgeram was invited to represent our state at the opening of the World War II museum in New Orleans. Her participation led to scholarships and acceptance to the prestigious Tulane University, where she is now studying science.

“If you want to be awed, if you want to be inspired, if you want a healthy dose of hope in our collective future, I encourage you to come see the State History Day competition and support these hard-working students and educators,” said Mark Vessey, History Day Coordinator at Washington State Historical Society. “The 2017 Washington State History Day competition will mark the statewide culmination of a year-long academic competition, where students will be competing with the top students from each participating region for a chance to place and be invited to the national competition in June.”

National Endowment for the Humanities grants helped National History Day grow from a pilot project in 1974 into a national program that now operates in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and in international schools in China, Korea and South Asia.
For educator resources and more exciting information about History Day, see WSHS’s website (http://www.washingtonhistory.org/education/historyday/), or email Mark.Vessey@wshs.wa.gov. To help support History Day in Washington, contact Laura Berry, Development Director at WSHS, Laura.Berry@wshs.wa.gov or 253-798-5899.

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Media are welcome to be present and interview contestants, coordinators and teachers. The 2017 Washington State History Day competition takes place Saturday, April 29, from 8:00 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. at Green River Community College, 12401 SE 320th Street, Auburn, WA 98092.
Image credits, top to bottom:

Washington medal winners at National History Day’s 2009 competition.

Bobby Aiyer, Evergreen Middle School, first place at the 2016 state competition and first in the nation for the Junior Individual Documentary category.

Marissa McMaster, Northshore Junior High, first place at the 2016 state competition and fourth place in the nation in the Senior Individual Exhibit category.

Bobby Aiyer, Evergreen Middle School, receiving his first place award at the 2016 National History Day contest, in the Junior Individual Documentary category.

About The Washington State Historical Society
1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all.

The Washington State Historical Society is a non-profit 501(c)3 membership organization, open to any and all individuals, families, or firms. The Society is also recognized in statute (RCW 27.34) as a trustee agency of the state of Washington with enumerated powers.

Founded in 1891 and now into its second century of service, the Washington State Historical Society is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and vividly presenting Washington's rich and storied history. The Historical Society is comprised of a family of museums and research centers, offering a variety of services to researchers, historians, scholars, and lifelong learners. By connecting personal, local, regional, and national stories to the universality of the human experience, and collecting materials from our state that help tell those stories, the Washington State Historical Society has become indispensable to the people of Washington and a vital part of state government.