Students across the state gear up for a challenge: the April 21 Washington History Day competition

Tacoma, WA – “It takes tenacity to tackle a research project and talk about it publicly,” said Katie Demar-Aldrich, History Day coordinator for the Washington State Historical Society. Middle and high school students have been competing in regional contests since February, hoping to be selected for the statewide competition on April 21, 2018.

Washington’s History Day program is organized by the Washington State Historical Society, working with coordinators (typically history teachers) in eight regions. It is an affiliate of the National History Day (NHD) program.

The 2018 History Day theme, Conflict and Compromise in History, asked students to reflect on how disputes and agreements have shaped the course of history. Students chose a historical topic, then conducted extensive primary and secondary research, which they analyzed and interpreted to draw conclusions about the impact and significance of their topic; the final step is to share findings through papers, performances, documentaries, websites, or exhibits. Students present their work at school and can choose to enter History Day contests where they present to a panel of judges.

The winners of regional contests are invited to the state contest at Green River College in Auburn. The April 21 statewide finale is open to the public. If you’re curious about how history and youth connect in 2018, visit the competition and talk with some inspiring students about their work.

“The courage and excitement students bring to each contest is contagious. I’m having a blast rooting for them to continue exploring their interests and to remain curious,” Demar-Aldrich shared.

Students who make it to the top levels at the Washington State History Day Contest will be invited to the national competition, held in June at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD. Last year, 57 students from Washington competed at nationals. Several of them brought home awards: from Delta High School in West Richland, Hannah Doyle and Zachary Matson took first place in the senior group website category with Mother Jones: Marching with the Mill Children, and Jeaziree Salise took tenth place in the
senior individual website category for *Taking a Stand for the Ancient One: Bonnichsen et al. v. the United States*; from Evergreen Middle School in Sammamish, Ananya Nandula, Ananya Ganapathi, and Layasri Ranjith won first place in the junior group documentary category for *The Tuskegee Airmen: Courage Knows No Color*, and Viduyt Baskar and Pranav Sheokand were awarded second in junior group exhibits for *In a League of Their Own: How Ludwig Guttmann’s Paralympics Put the ‘Ability’ in ‘Disability’*. 

Bill Boniface coordinated for the North Puget Sound regional History Day contest, which was held March 10, with 350 students participating. “The topics at the contest ranged from wars and battles to social conflicts like the Pullman Strike or Roe v. Wade. Since students choose what they want to research, there’s a lot of buy in,” he observed. “I love teaching History Day because it provides students with opportunities to engage in rigorous research and to communicate an analysis of history to a wide audience. The experience is one that stays with them. It is, hands-down, one of the most rigorous academic exercises students will encounter in their pre-college years.”

More than half a million students and thirty thousand teachers participate annually in National History Day. The program offers a framework for students to develop a deeper appreciation of history, and to enhance skills in critical thinking, problem solving, reading and research. The program also builds self-esteem and confidence.

History Day competitions depend on the help of volunteers to judge and provide student feedback. If you’re a history lover and you enjoy working with students, consider giving some of your time to this endeavor. Find out more about History Day on the WSHS website and to inquire about volunteering, contact Katie Demar-Aldrich at 253-798-5921 or katherine.demar-aldrich@wshs.wa.gov.

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Image credit:
The 2017 Washington History Day team entering the arena at the national competition, orca mascots in tow.

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

**Address:** 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402

**Washington State History Museum:**
**Hours:** 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM Tuesday through Sunday. On the Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM. **Admission:** Free for members; Adults $14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) $11; free for children 5 and under; family rate $40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a Washington Quest card can attend for $1 per person or $2 per family. Admission is free 3:00 – 8:00 PM on the Third Thursday of each month.