



Experiences of Past Contestants



Alene Holmberg

As a freshman at Inglemoor High School in 2009, former national contestant Alene Holmberg says her History Day skills have made the transition to high school easier: "The very first week in world history I had to use my HD skills. We had to write a paragraph and come up with a thesis just by looking at a picture and analyzing it- all in less than 30 minutes! It was hard, but I think my HD skills made all the difference. After I turned it in, my teacher read my paper in front of the class and said my thesis was excellent! Every time I look at the paper I just thank HD because I know how to write a good thesis!"



Nathan Maris

As an eighth-grader from Kirkland's International Community School in 2008, Nathan Maris created a History Day documentary titled *The Battle of Wake Island: Conflict and Compromise of the Marine Credo*.

He placed second at state and went to nationals, where he won the Marine Corps History Special Prize.

Nathan was honored at the Marine Corps annual gala in Washington, DC, later that year.

In 2009, his documentary on geologist J. Harlen Bretz placed 1st at the state contest, and 13th in the nation.

Last year, Nathan's documentary "Blood Plasma: Charles Drew's Innovation and Its Impact on Trauma Medicine," won the silver medal at the national competition, and he won the Legacy Award for Creativity, too!

Kelsey Roldness and Jennifer Turkington

Kelsey Roldness and Jennifer Turkington of Pleasant Valley Middle School in Battle Ground made it to the 2009 state contest with their documentary, *The Actions and Impact of Meriwether Lewis: Implementing the Doctrine of Discovery*, and thought their History Day journey had ended there. But their teacher nominated the project for a Youth Achievement Award from the Lewis and Clark Heritage Foundation, and the girls were honored at the Foundation's 2009 meeting in Memphis, Tennessee.

Attendees—including Gary Moulton, editor of the journals of Lewis and Clark—were impressed by the girls' work. Although they weren't able to attend the meeting, a Foundation Board member presented the trophy to the girls in a special ceremony in Washington later that year.



Hillary Smith

Sequim student Hillary Smith and teacher Tricia Billes celebrate her second consecutive bronze medal in the paper category at the national contest. She won this year for her research on Harriet Beecher Stowe. Last year's paper on Belva Lockwood, the first woman to be admitted to the bar of the US Supreme Court, garnered a personal letter from President Bill Clinton, who concluded, "Great job. Thanks for doing the paper. I learned a lot."



Rebecca Smith

Rebecca Smith was an 8th-grader at Canyon Park Junior High in Bothell when she began her first History Day project, a paper on Wenatchee World founder Rufus Woods that made the national contest.

Using extensive primary sources gleaned from libraries and archives, Rebecca showed how Woods used the newspaper to promote building the Grand Coulee dam, setting the stage for agriculture in Eastern Washington. The paper was published in COLUMBIA magazine.

Her freshman year, she wrote a paper on the San Juan Island “Pig War”—a border scuffle between the US and Canada—that also went to the national contest and is published on HistoryLink. A noted Northwest historian called Rebecca’s paper groundbreaking, and said she had uncovered sources that experts had never before seen.

As a sophomore, her paper on “Big Hugh” Bennett and the Soil Conservation Service during the Dust Bowl won the gold medal at nationals and was published in *The History Teacher*, the journal of the Society for History Education.

After receiving numerous scholarship offers from the most prestigious schools in the country, Rebecca headed east in summer 2009 to study history at Yale. She credits her History Day experience for her success.



Kirsten Wright

Kirsten Wright first competed in History Day as a seventh-grader from Wy’east Middle School in Vancouver. Her group exhibit on Braille took fourth at the national contest that year, the first time Wy’east students had made it to that level.

In ninth grade, she and a friend produced a documentary on Edward R. Murrow’s stand against McCarthyism that won first at state and competed at nationals.

This year, she started as a freshman at Occidental College, and wrote her former teacher, “History Day helped to establish my study, writing and research habits, and I am so grateful for that.”



Anthony Zendejas

As an eighth-grader, Anthony Zendejas of Klahowya Secondary School in Silverdale placed fourth at the state contest with his performance on the Bataan Death March.

A Japanese-American POW reconciliation group heard about his project and asked to post his script on its website.

The Bataan Death March Survivors' Group saw the script and asked Anthony to perform at their annual meeting in 2006. And 2007. And 2008.

In 2009, Anthony performed at the last meeting of the group; there aren't enough survivors left to continue.

Anthony became the first student honored by the organization for his work in promoting veterans' history.

At the meeting, he saw a Japanese diplomat issue a formal apology to the veterans for the Bataan Death March.

Anthony gathered more than 500 letters of support to send to veterans of the march, and continues to be involved with veterans issues today.