Wyoming Educator Contributes to New Free Resource Seeks to Invigorate World War II Teaching in the Classroom

ABMCeducation.org features lesson plans that personalize American involvement and sacrifice in World War II

WASHINGTON, D.C. – National History Day (NHD), the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media are launching a new, free digital resource for teachers on Veterans Day: www.ABMCeducation.org. This website includes 21 lesson plans created by American teachers who took the trip of a lifetime this summer to discover the stories of World War II fallen heroes buried and memorialized overseas as part of the Understanding Sacrifice education program.

Gayla Hammer, a sixth grade science teacher at Lander Middle School in Lander, Wyoming, created a middle school integrated lesson plan that spans the disciplines of math, science, social studies, and language arts. Hammer studied U.S. Army Air Force 1st Lt. Gale McGowan, of Leadville, Colorado. Hammer’s lesson plan, “I’ll Huff and Puff and Blow your Ships Up” : The Impact of the German Wolf Pack During the Battle of the Atlantic, teaches students about German naval tactics and how U-Boats impacted Allied travel in the Atlantic. Multiple video clips accompany a hands-on activity explaining the science behind U-Boats and the tactics Germany used to prevent men and supplies from reaching Europe. Hammer wanted to “provide a hands-on, engaging method for students to learn about the war against Germany.” Students gain an understanding of how warfare has driven the advancement of technology, how the German U-boats impacted the Battle of the Atlantic, and the effect of neutral, negative and positive buoyancy on an object in water. Hammer’s lesson plan is hosted on ABMCeducation.org along with those of the 17 other teachers who participated in Understanding Sacrifice.

To see her fallen hero profile on First Lieutenant McGowan, visit: http://abmceducation.org/understandingsacrifice/soldier/gale-mcgowan

Teachers selected local American service members who lost their lives in northern Europe. Through months of intense study and in-depth research, the teachers uncovered the story of their fallen hero while developing a broader understanding of the campaigns and battles in which they fought. The group then traveled through northern Europe, from the United Kingdom to France to the Netherlands and Belgium to visit America’s overseas cemeteries and to walk the battlegrounds where these men gave their lives.

“National History Day is always looking for new and engaging ways to demonstrate the power of history,” said NHD Executive Director Dr. Cathy Gorn. “This partnership with the American Battle Monuments Commission and the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University allowed us to take 18 extraordinary teachers to battlefields and memorials of northern Europe. Their experience can now aid teachers around the world through 21 engaging lesson plans about a variety of topics.”
Each lesson plan is based on solid scholarship, integrated with Common Core, and makes use of interpretive materials provided by ABMC. They are accompanied by research about fallen heroes of World War II who are honored at ABMC cemeteries in northern Europe.

The following teachers created lesson plans to invigorate the teaching of World War II in America’s classrooms.

- Alan Birkemeier - Central Middle School in Columbus, IN
- Joseph Boyle – Morrison R. Waite High School in Toledo, OH
- Maile Chow - Mid-Pacific Institute in Honolulu, HI
- Donald Davis - George Washington High School in Chicago, IL
- Matthew Elms - Singapore American School in Singapore
- Brendan Gallagher - Carroll County Career & Technology Center in Westminster, MD
- Gayla Hammer – Lander Middle School in Lander, WY
- Julie Heintz - Mississippi School for Math and Science in Columbus, MS
- Melanie Hunt - Morristown East High School in Morristown, TN
- Amanda Kordeliski - Irving Middle School in Norman, OK
- Katherine Lorio - Westfield High School in Chantilly, VA
- Christina O’Connor - Hingham High School in Hingham, MA
- Cherie Redelings - Francis Parker School in San Diego, CA
- Patrick Slowey - Steamboat Springs High School in Steamboat Springs, CO
- Erica Swenson – Bruce M. Whittier Middle School in Poland, ME
- Brian Weaver - Central Bucks High School – West in Doylestown, PA
- Kamilah Williams - Suitland High School in Forestville, MD
- Pren Woods - Alston Middle School in Summerville, SC

NHD is a non-profit education organization in College Park, MD. Established in 1974, NHD offers year-long academic programs that engage over half a million middle- and high-school students around the world annually in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. These research-based projects are entered into contests at the local and affiliate levels, where the top student projects have the opportunity to advance to the National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD also seeks to improve the quality of history education by providing professional development opportunities and curriculum materials for educators. NHD is sponsored in part by Kenneth E. Behring, Patricia Behring, HISTORY®, Jostens, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Park Service, Southwest Airlines, the Joe Weider Foundation, and the WEM 2000 Foundation of the Dorsey & Whitney Foundation. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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