

News Release

National History Day

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Connecticut Students Win at National History Day

College Park, MD - Sixty-nine middle and high school students made Connecticut history as they represented our state at the prestigious National History Day Contest, which took place at the University of Maryland in College Park from June 10 to June 13. The students, who created exhibits, documentaries, papers, websites and performances showcasing historical research and analysis, competed with more than 2,700 students from across the country and ended the contest with seven awards for excellence. The four-day contest culminated in a 3-hour Awards Ceremony on June 13. There were several Connecticut winners.

- Sam Porcello won 2nd place in Junior Individual Exhibit with his project *The Hartford Circus Fire: A 10 Minute Turning Point Sparks Lasting Change*. Sam is a student at Sedgwick Middle School in West Hartford.
- Madeline, Claire, and Emma Langdon won 2nd place in Junior Group Exhibit with their project *The Connecticut Effect: How the Hartford Circus Fire Changed the Nation*. They are students at Greenfield Hill Girls School in Fairfield.
- Pierce Barry, Annabel Barry, Quinn Barry, Isabella Altherr and Jaden Esse, won 3rd place for their Senior Group Performance, *The Tet Offensive: Turning Point in Vietnam, Turning Point in Journalism*. They are students at Pequot Home School in Southport.
- Timothy Cohn won the George Washington Leadership in History Prize (sponsored by Mount Vernon) with his exhibit, *Washington and the French: A Turning Point in the American Revolution*. Tim is a student at Pomperaug High School in Southbury.
- Rebecca Hill was awarded a four -year National History Day scholarship to the University of Maryland. She is a junior at Pomperaug High School.
- Nicholas Serrambana received the Senior Prize for Outstanding Connecticut Entry for his performance, *The Precedence of Evidence: Selection Prevails*. He is a student at Classical Magnet School in Hartford.
- Danielle Meyers and Abigail Davis received the Junior Prize for Outstanding Connecticut Entry for *Penicillin: The Miracle Drug of World War II*. They are students at Memorial Middle School in Middlebury.

Additionally, several Connecticut students were recognized as finalists at the National Contest:

- Jenna Fortunati and Margaret Mirabella, from Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden, for their documentary, *Martha Matilda Harper: The Start of Franchising*;
- Jonas Burkhard and Timothy Nolan, from E.O. Smith High School in Storrs, for their documentary, *A Country Held Hostage: The CIA in Iran 1953*;
- Erin McGrath, from Ellington High School, for her performance *Street Smarts: The World Thanks to Sesame Street*;
- Ben Freedman from Turn of River Middle School in Stamford for his paper *Microsoft Windows 95: The Software that Changed Personal Computing*; and
- Jessie Xu from Bristow Middle School in West Hartford for her documentary, *Wangari Maathai: Inspiration for the World*.

The Awards Ceremony ended a busy week for students, parents, teachers and Connecticut's History Day Coordinator, Rebecca-Taber Conover, Head of Public Programs and History Day for Connecticut's Old State House. According to Taber-Conover, "We've had a whirl-wind week filled with great experiences. All of the students who have participated in History Day have worked hard, learned a lot, and made Connecticut proud."

The students presented their projects to teams of judges, met fellow contestants, and participated in several special activities. U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal, who had attended the State Contest at Central Connecticut State University, met with the students to hear about their projects and experiences. The Connecticut delegation enjoyed private tours of the U. S. Capitol and the National Gallery of Art as well as a special National History Day Night at the Museum of American History. Each state nominated one project for display at the Museum and Sam Porcello's project on the Hartford Circus Fire represented Connecticut.

The road to National History Day (NHD) usually begins in Connecticut's classrooms and home schools where well over 2,000 students choose topics reflecting an annual NHD theme, conduct research and analysis and create an exhibit, performance, website, paper or documentary that shares their findings. Of these, 1,250 students competed in this year's District Contests, with over 400 of winners going on to the State Contest, which sends first and second-place winners on to Nationals. History Day in Connecticut is one of 54 affiliate programs of National History Day, a renowned, year-long, academic program. A recent study by *Rockman, et al* found students who participate in National History Day develop a range of college and career-ready skills, and outperform their peers on state standardized tests in multiple subjects.

All of this is made possible by a strong collaboration among many of Connecticut's history organizations who work with dedicated educators to help students develop critical thinking skills and a passion for learning and sharing history. A shared goal is to encourage a life-long interest in Connecticut's rich stories, archives, historic buildings and museum collections. The collaboration is led by Connecticut's Old State House and the Connecticut Historical Society, funded by Connecticut Humanities, and supported by the Connecticut League of History Organizations, Central Connecticut State University and scores of historical societies and civic groups who provide special prizes at the state level.

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