



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **VERNON STUDENT-TEACHER TEAM COMPLETES WWII RESEARCH IN HAWAII**

**Vernon, Conn** – Regina Lee, an educator who runs the gifted and talented program at Vernon Center Middle School, and Nicholas Angeli, one of Ms. Lee’s former students, recently completed a week of immersive research about World War II at the highly competitive **Sacrifice for Freedom®: Student & Teacher Institute** in Hawaii.

This all-expenses-paid program provides sixteen student/teacher pairs from across the country with the opportunity to conduct research and experience history first-hand at Pearl Harbor and other significant World War II sites. Designed by National History Day® to educate students about the sacrifice of war, the cultural history of Hawai‘i and the legacy of the Silent Heroes® who are buried at the National Memorial Cemetery, the **Sacrifice for Freedom®: Student & Teacher Institute program** is now in its third year. The program is sponsored by Pearl Harbor Historic Site partners.

Prior to the Institute, students select and research the lives of a Silent Hero. Ms. Lee and Nick researched William G. Fournier from Norwich, who died at Guadalcanal. After a week of being steeped in WWII history, students then give a eulogy at the service member’s grave. Congressman Joe Courtney has posted Nicholas and Regina’s eulogy recording on his website, along with a writeup about the pair.

Ms. Lee is a gifted and talented teacher in the Vernon schools, and runs the CT History Day program there. She was selected as the 2021 Vernon Teacher of the Year, and was also the 2020 Connecticut nominee for National History Day’s Patricia Behring Teacher of the Year Award.

Nick Angeli is a multi-year prize winner at Connecticut History Day, receiving honors for his project about the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of 1918, and a special prize from the CT State Historic Preservation Office for Outstanding Entry That Incorporates a Building, Landscape, or Archaeological Site for his project about the Diplomatic Tragedy of Pearl Harbor.

"William Fournier lost so much of his family-- his mother, his aunt who adopted him, and his brother – that when he died he didn't have a family to mourn him or keep his memory alive," recalls Ms. Lee. "Nick and I feel like we've become his family, and we want to make sure he is never forgotten."

On January 13, 1942, Sergeant William Fournier and the 25th Infantry Division fell under Japanese attack at Guadalcanal. Sergeant Fournier and a fellow soldier manned the machine gun post of a fallen comrade at great risk to themselves. Their heroic action broke the attack, killed 46 Japanese soldiers and led to an eventual enemy retreat. Both men died in that battle. Sergeant Fournier was a recipient of the Purple Heart, the Medal of Honor, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, and the World War II Victory Medal.

**Connecticut History Day** (CHD) is one of 58 affiliate programs of National History Day, and is a program in residence at Connecticut's Old State House. CHD annually engages over 4,000 middle- and high-school students in historical research, interpretation, and creative expression through project-based learning. Led by the Connecticut Democracy Center, CHD is presented with major funding and partnership support from CT Humanities. Program support is provided by the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area and New Haven Museum. For more information, visit [historydayct.org](http://historydayct.org)

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