



Missouri Students Compete in First Virtual National History Day Competition

COLUMBIA, MO, April 30, 2020 – The 2020 National History Day in Missouri contest looked much different from all previous years. After schools across Missouri closed their buildings and switched to remote learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHD in Missouri followed suit. The state contest was held online in April. Student who received first and second place awards at the state competition will compete in the national online contest in June.

Danielle Griego, who coordinates the NHD in Missouri program, said that instead of meeting face-to-face with judges, students presented exhibit panels through PowerPoint slideshows and uploaded their documentaries to the internet. The most significant change was in the performance category. Rather than gathering to record group performances, which could pose safety concerns, students provided scripts for judges to review.

Learning that the contest would be moved online instead of being suspended was a welcome relief to students who spent many months preparing for competition. “Virtual NHD allowed me to work on something academically important and interesting when so many activities have been canceled,” said Emily Coleman, a freshman at Liberty North High School in Liberty. Junior Rachel Kim, who attends the same high school, said the quarantine made it harder to do research with libraries closed, but she found many resources online.

“Someday, students will choose this pandemic as their NHD project because we are living through an unknown moment in history right now. We are seeing the connection between learning about history and being a part of history,” said Kim.

Social studies teacher Derek Frieling of Lafayette High School in St. Joseph said he will miss the adrenaline rush he gets from seeing students cross the stage when their names are announced as contest winners. “Students will still be rewarded for their hard work,” said Frieling, who credits the quick actions of national and state organizers for ensuring the contest would still happen this year.

Paula Carson, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Missouri Southern University, helped organize Joplin’s regional competition this year. She said that canceling the competition would have added more disappointment to the lives of students. “In this spring of canceled competitions, proms, recitals, and graduation, National History Day in Missouri worked very hard to give students something to look forward to in this otherwise unprecedented chaotic time.”

Students who received awards in the five categories of competition are recognized online at nhdmo.org. The State Historical Society of Missouri sponsors and organizes the NHDMO program, which involves over 5,000 students in Missouri each year. Additional sponsors are listed on the organization’s website.

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