



053008-Schafer-Southard

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EARLY PASSION FOR HISTORY LEADS TO “HISTORY TEACHER OF THE YEAR” HONOR FOR WARHILL HIGH SCHOOL INSTRUCTOR

Williamsburg, VA, May 29 – All it took for Candace Schafer-Southard when she was a little girl was a family vacation trip to Fort Niagara and Fort George in New York. While there, she had the opportunity to handle historic artifacts, make real musket balls with costumed historians and see for herself where some of the country’s most historic events took place.

“From that point forward, history became my favorite subject,” says Schafer-Southard, a history instructor at Warhill High School. “Not the kind of history that one just reads about in books, but the kind of history that one experiences through the eyes of those who lived it. I knew right then that recreating historical experiences for others was what I wanted to do.”

And for devoting her 13-year career to doing just that, Candace Schafer-Southard has been named the 2008 Virginia Preserve America History Teacher of the Year, bestowed by the Virginia Department of Education and the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History.

“Reading some of Candace’s exciting lesson plans makes it very clear why she has earned this prestigious award,” notes Superintendent Gary Mathews. “Warhill High School students are indeed fortunate to have a teacher as passionate as Candace to learn from about our nation’s history.”



Candace Schafer-Southard

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The honor is given every year to an instructor in each state who exhibits a deep career commitment to teaching American history, which includes local and state history; evidence of creativity and imagination in the classroom that address literacy and content beyond state standards, and pays close attention to primary documents, artifacts, historic sites, and other primary materials of history, including oral history.

Following are some examples of Ms. Schafer-Southard's lesson plans:

– Students experience the life of a Civil War soldier by examining letters, photographs, and music, manipulating reproduction artifacts, visiting the galleries and living history areas of the National Museum of the Civil War Soldier at Pamplin Park, and creating an historical fiction letter home from the perspective of a Union or Confederate soldier.

– Students learn about the Vietnam War from the perspective of those who fought it. Students view “Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam,” experience the draft using the 1970 lottery, and are assigned an actual soldier to research using the virtual wall and other resources. Students then create a “letter home” from the perspective of their assigned soldier, including concerns, feelings, pop culture, and appropriate military slang to demonstrate their understanding of the effects of a controversial war.

– Students are asked to make a personal connection to history by completing the “Putting the U in US History” project. In this end of course project, students make connections between events in history and their family. Typically, students interview family members and discover how wars, the depression, segregation and other events connected to their personal history and influenced the lives of people in their family.

Schafer-Southard will receive a \$1,000 prize and a plaque for her achievement, and will automatically become eligible for consideration for National History Teacher of the Year honors, to be awarded later this year.

“By incorporating into my lessons the wonderful technology we now have available here at Warhill High School, my students can now examine primary source documents, paintings, photographs, music and other artifacts to see that history is not just old news by old dead people, but that history is alive in them,” Schafer-Southard says. “My hope is that I will ignite the same spark in my students that was lit inside me when I was a girl that has yet to be extinguished.”