



NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 26, 2020

J.R. Gerritts Students Advance to National History Competition

Kimberly, Wis. – May 26, 2020. — Two [J.R. Gerritts Middle School](#) (JRG) teams recently won the State competition for National History Day (NHD) and are heading to Nationals. More than 1,700 students from across Wisconsin competed in the State History Day contest, which was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those, 61 students are advancing to nationals.

“This is a huge accomplishment for these students,” said Gifted and Talented Coordinator Ulli Balisteri. “It is extremely difficult to get this far and requires a great deal of commitment and motivation.”

NHD is an exciting academic enrichment program that helps students learn about historical issues, ideas, people and events. The 2020 contest theme was *Breaking Barriers in History*, and this year’s unprecedented circumstances added an extra layer of meaning to the theme. The top students from all 50 states, D.C., U.S. territories and international schools, are invited to compete in the National Contest.

“To make it to the National Contest in a normal year is a remarkable achievement,” said NHD Executive Director Dr. Cathy Gorn. “Given the added challenges facing students because of the coronavirus and nationwide school closures, I am even more impressed by what they have done this year. They have shown an incredible level of perseverance amid adversity, and I am confident we will continue to see great things from all of these students. The critical thinking and research skills learned through competing in NHD, especially now, will help these students achieve success in college and their careers.”

JRG 8th graders, Madelyn Strebel, Faith Gilkerson, and Allison Oleszak, created a documentary about *Nellie Bly* - A brave 19th-century investigative reporter who put herself in grave danger to inform the world about hidden injustices. JRG 7th graders, Greta Melzl and Maddi Mohr, created a website about [Code Talkers](#) - the brave Navajo men who created and broke many barriers in WWII.

More than 300 historians and education professionals will serve as judges for the students’ work. As with all other aspects of the contest this year, the judging will be conducted virtually. More than 100 students from across the country will be awarded cash prizes between \$500 and \$2,000 each for their superior work in particular judging categories.

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About the Kimberly Area School District

The Kimberly Area School District is a progressive public school district committed to providing the best possible education available to students. Its responsibility is to help lead the way in developing well-rounded students and future citizens. The District wants every student to be given the opportunity to reach their potential through academics, the arts and co-curricular activities. It encompasses approximately 17 square miles and serves over 5,000 students in one 4K center, four elementary schools (5K-4), two intermediate schools (5-6), one middle school (7-8) and one high school (9-12). To learn more about the Kimberly Area School District, call (920)788-7900 or visit www.kimberly.k12.wi.us.

About National History Day® (NHD): NHD is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, which seeks to improve the teaching and learning of history. The National History Day Contest was established in 1974 and currently engages more than half a million students every year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD is sponsored in part by HISTORY®, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Park Service, Southwest Airlines, The Better Angels Society, Jacqueline B. Mars, and BBVA. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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