

National History Day empowers teachers and students to research untold stories from U.S. Marine Corps Veterans from World War II

COLLEGE PARK, MD – November 10, 2025 – In honor of Veterans Day and the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps, [National History Day](http://nhd.org)® (NHD) is proud to announce the teachers selected for its newest Silent Heroes® program, *Untold Stories from the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II*, sponsored by a grant from the [Veterans Legacy Program](http://veteranslegacy.org) at the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](http://dva.hhs.gov). This fall, selected teachers will partner with their students to research the lives of over 100 Veterans who served during World War II, continued to serve their community after returning home, and are currently buried or memorialized in a U.S. national or state Veterans cemetery.

Teachers and students will meet monthly with historian Christopher Hamner, Ph.D., of George Mason University to study the history of the Marine Corps, World War II, and the experience of Veterans who returned to their communities. Guided by eight research mentors, participants will use NHD-created materials and other resources such as Ancestry Classroom, Fold3, Newspapers.com, local libraries and historical societies, and Official Military Personnel Files requested from the National Personnel Records Center. After conducting their research, teams will synthesize the information to tell the story of their Veteran's life and service with a profile published on the [Veterans Legacy Memorial](http://veteranslegacy.org) and NHD's [Silent Heroes website](http://silentheroes.org). See a sample [Silent Hero profile here](#) from NHD's 2024/2025 program, focusing on Korean War-era Veterans.

"On Veterans Day, we recognize all Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. I am very proud of the teachers and students researching World War II Veterans who served in the Marine Corps through a grant funded by the Veterans Legacy Program," said Cathy Gorn, Ph.D., Executive Director of National History Day. "Studying local history and giving a voice to the stories of Veterans is some of the most powerful work students and teachers can do with National History Day."

After the teachers and students research their chosen Veterans' lives, military service, and contributions to their communities this fall, student-teacher teams will visit their local national cemetery in spring 2026 to honor their Veterans and read eulogies at their graves. In addition to the digital profiles, NHD will produce video eulogies for the Veterans. See a sample NHD-produced [video eulogy](#).

The teachers selected for this program represent 33 states and 42 U.S. national or state cemeteries. NHD celebrates the following teachers participating in this program and the Veterans they selected to research:

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Alabama	Ms. Callie Outlaw Tuscaloosa Academy Tuscaloosa, AL	U.S. Navy Pharmacist's Mate Second Class Corpsman Hubert Albert Awtrey (U.S. Marine Corps Corpsman) Corporal Addie Belle Raybon Bozeman	Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, AL
Arizona	Dr. Rebekah West Keur Gary K. Herberger Young Scholars Academy Phoenix, AZ	Sergeant Major Elmo Arthur Burns Gunnery Sergeant Charles Frankel Corporal Ruth Rosalie Horenstein Staff Sergeant Janet Ann Pearson Stoeberl	National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona, Phoenix, AZ
Arkansas	Mrs. Katy Wellborn Pulaski Academy Little Rock, AR	Private Louis Ferdinand Brown Captain John Howard Yancey	Little Rock National Cemetery, Little Rock, AR
California	Ms. Aditi Doshi Van Nuys High School Van Nuys, CA	Corporal Ivan Caldwell Cannady Sergeant Frances Helen Pyeatt Salyer	Los Angeles National Cemetery, Los Angeles, CA
Delaware	Ms. Emily Green POLYTECH School District Woodside, DE	Corporal Albert John Homiak	Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery – New Castle County, Bear, DE
		Corporal Robert Ezra Williams	Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Millsboro, DE

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Florida	Mr. Alex Hujik Lake Highland Preparatory School Orlando, FL	Staff Sergeant Thomas Joseph Pechacek Sergeant Isom “Ike” Alto Rigell	Cape Canaveral National Cemetery, Mims, FL
	Mrs. Mercedes Cortes City of Pembroke Pines Charter School Middle- West Campus Pembroke Pines, FL	Staff Sergeant Joseph Gulya Corporal Samuel Harold Oser	South Florida National Cemetery, Wellington, FL
Georgia	Ms. April Balenger Arts Innovation Magnet Program Winder, GA	Corporal Inez Riley Moss Sergeant August Joseph Tramonte	Georgia National Cemetery, Canton, GA
	Ms. Arminda Lawrence, Sr. Pace Academy Atlanta, GA	Gunnery Sergeant Warren C. Armstrong Private First Class Miles Robert Donaldson Master Sergeant John T. Kesler Master Gunnery Sergeant Richard R. Neumann	Marietta National Cemetery, Marietta, GA
Hawai'i	Ms. Pualeilani Fernandez Hilo Intermediate School Hilo, HI	Chief Warrant Officer Second Class George David Durham Private Robert Edward Lemmon	East Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery, Hilo, HI
	Ms. Janyce Omura Maui High School Kahului, HI	Major Jay “Jason” Leonard Anthony Lembeck Lieutenant Colonel Russell “Whitey” Lloyd	Maui Veterans Cemetery, Makawao, HI
Idaho	Mr. Adam Mastalski Compass Honors High School Meridian, ID	Private First Class Ivan Emery Fleming Sergeant Joseph Stinson “Joe” McElhinney, Jr.	Idaho State Veterans Cemetery, Boise, ID
Indiana	Mrs. Kristin Rentschler Columbia City High School Columbia City, IN	Lieutenant Colonel Russell John McCurdy Private William Alfred Yates, Jr.	Marion National Cemetery, Marion, IN

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Iowa	Mr. Jonathan Markus Adel DeSoto Minburn Middle School Adel, IA	Major Merton Peter "Mert" Hansen Private First Class James William "Jim" McLeran	Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Adel, IA
	Ms. Cheryl Smith Johnston High School Johnston Middle School Johnston, IA	Sergeant George Elias Addison Private First Class Raymond Norbert Dickes First Lieutenant Robert Daniel Gaskill	Iowa Veterans Cemetery, Adel, IA
Kentucky	Mrs. Laura Craig Bethlehem High School Bardstown, KY	Private Elmer Lee Arnold Corporal James Beaven Miles	Lebanon National Cemetery, Lebanon, KY
Louisiana	Mr. Paul Manuel Valdezco Glasgow Middle School Baton Rouge, LA	Private Johnnie Ervin Branch, Jr. Sergeant George Sylvester Greeneberg	Baton Rouge National Cemetery, Baton Rouge, LA
Maryland	Mrs. Amie Dryer The Calverton School Huntingdon, MD	Private Paul F. W. Hummel Corporal Ruth Daria Franz Hummel Colonel John Nevin Rentz	Baltimore National Cemetery, Baltimore, MD
	Mrs. Jennifer Harris Salisbury Christian School Salisbury, MD	Corporal Joseph Elia Camardese, Sr. Private First Class Vaughn Brown Russell	Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Sussex County, Millsboro, DE
Massachusetts	Mr. Michael Hill St. Mary's Lynn Lynn, MA	Corporal Keith Albert Krewson Colonel Ernestine Stowell	Massachusetts National Cemetery, Bourne, MA
Michigan	Mrs. Chelsea Blair Our Lady of Refuge School West Bloomfield Township, MI	Corporal Herman Harold Schneider Master Sergeant David Splatt	Great Lakes National Cemetery, Holly, MI
Mississippi	Mrs. Elizabeth Green College and Career Technical Institute Pascagoula, MS	Major Robert Hill McCormick Staff Sergeant Marguerite H. Ross	Biloxi National Cemetery, Biloxi, MS

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Montana	Mrs. Taylor Olsen Harlowton High School Harlowton, MT	Sergeant Edward William "Bill" Knebel Corporal Walter S. Pfister	Yellowstone National Cemetery, Laurel, MT
New Hampshire	Mrs. Megan Philbrook Andover Elementary/Middle School Andover, NH	Corporal Rudolph Eugene Miniutti Corporal Reginald Guy Walker, Jr.	New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery, Boscawen, NH
New Jersey	Ms. Gwen Duralek Franklin High School Somerset, NJ	Corporal Joseph Raup Private First Class Georgia M. McMahon Rogers	Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Wrightstown, NJ
New York	Mr. Bryan Melnick Simon Baruch Middle School New York, NY	Corporal William C. Arnold Lieutenant Colonel Francis Joseph Nelligan	Cypress Hills National Cemetery, Brooklyn, NY
	Mrs. Karen Schmitt Stimson Middle School Huntington Station, NY	Sergeant James F. McEnery Sergeant Laurence Edward Morva	Long Island National Cemetery, Farmingdale, NY
	Mr. Patrick Sprinkle New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies New York, NY	Corporal Peter Humberto Fabregas Corporal Gerard Francis Jansen	Long Island National Cemetery, Farmingdale, NY

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
North Carolina	Ms. Whitney Cooper Valley Springs Middle School Arden, NC	Major Thomas Fulton Savage, Jr. Steward First Class Alfred Jetter Whitesides, Sr.	Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery, Black Mountain, NC
	Ms. Patricia Robblee Lejeune High School Camp Lejeune, NC	Master Sergeant Turner Grady Blount Gunnery Sergeant Wallace Alfred Boudrow	Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery, Jacksonville, NC
	Mr. Wesley Young Camden County High School Camden, NC	Corporal LeRoy "Shorty" Willie Cason Corporal Robert Elmo Nichols, Sr.	Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery, Suffolk, VA
Ohio	Dr. Christa Adams Bard Early College Cleveland Cleveland, OH	Corporal Paul English Dzeiak Master Technical Sergeant Germain Joseph "Jerry" Suminski	Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery, Rittman, OH
	Mrs. Brenda Unsinger Geneva High School Geneva, OH	Master Sergeant William Milton Pitts Corporal Martha Mary Rayne Weyrick	Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery, Rittman, OH
Oregon	Mrs. Stefanie Spivey Heppner Junior/Senior High School Heppner, OR	Sergeant Andy Nyal Campbell Colonel Kenneth Lyle Reusser	Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR
Pennsylvania	Mr. Brian Weaver Central Bucks High School - West Doylestown, PA	Corporal Edward Joseph Dymek Major Samuel Lynn Hynes	Washington Crossing National Cemetery, Washington Crossing, PA
South Carolina	Mrs. Kim Guthrie Palmetto Christian Academy Gaffney Gaffney, SC	Private First Class Richard Eugene Irvin Sergeant Louis Roy Sanchez	M.J. "Dolly" Cooper Veterans Cemetery, Anderson, SC
South Dakota	Mrs. Sue Larson Rapid City Christian School Rapid City, SD	Master Sergeant Thomas John Abourezk Corporal Benny James Gross	Black Hills National Cemetery, Sturgis, SD
Tennessee	Dr. Andrew Fultz L&N STEM Academy Knoxville, TN	Corporal George Edward Price Staff Sergeant Carl Burton Taylor	Eastern TN State Veterans Cemetery - Governor John Sevier Highway, Knoxville, TN

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Tennessee	Mrs. Whitney Joyner Kirkwood Middle School Clarksville, TN	Corporal William Pennington Hornsby Sergeant Francis Dubose Moore	Nashville National Cemetery, Nashville, TN
Texas	Mrs. Vannessa Guerra Dr. Archie Blanson Career and Technical Education High School Houston, TX	Technical Sergeant Eugene E. Pendergast Sergeant Maria Consuelo "Connie" Espinosa Pendergast Private First Class Arthur Espinoza Rodriquez, Sr.	Houston National Cemetery, Houston, TX
	Mrs. Heather McCormick, Mrs. Judy Garza, and Mr. Kelly Moore Snyder Junior High School Snyder, TX	Sergeant Robert Edward Arnold Corporal Otto Byrns (O.B.) Freeman, Jr. Captain Gordon Harris Gray Corporal Benjamin Frank Schwartz Corporal James "Coach" Stanley Suba Corporal Willis Merritt Zinn	Texas State Veterans Cemetery at Abilene, Abilene, TX
	Mrs. Michele Santosuosso St. Mark's School of Texas Dallas, TX	Technical Staff Sergeant Peter George Private First Class William A. "Speedy" Hecht	Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery, Dallas, TX
Utah	Mrs. Heidi Stone Syracuse Arts Academy Syracuse, UT	Captain Robert John Epperson Private First Class John Estrada	Utah Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Park, Bluffdale, UT
	Mrs. Julia Winslow Providence Hall Junior High School Herriman, UT	Captain Frank Douglas Boll, Jr. Sergeant Gladys Mae Topolski Breen	Utah Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Park, Bluffdale, UT

State	Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Virginia	Ms. Nicole Winter Cosby High School Midlothian, VA	Technical Sergeant Robert Kenneth Campbell, Sr. Technical Sergeant Edward Fisher McKnew, Jr.	Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia, Amelia, VA
Wisconsin	Mrs. Marley Hoefs St. Croix Falls High School St. Croix Falls, WI	Captain William Robert Bennewicz Corporal Harlan Theodore Rosvold	Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, MN
	Mr. Chuck Taft University School at Milwaukee Milwaukee, WI	Corporal Roman Dolata Private First Class Lloyd C. Schneider	Wood National Cemetery, Milwaukee, WI

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About National History Day (NHD)

NHD is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, that 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 the 400 Years of African American History Commission, The Better Angels Society, the Bezos Family Foundation, the Joyful Noise Charitable Foundation, the Behring Global Educational Foundation, and the National Park Service. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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