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Lighthouse student wins first-place in Minnesota History Day contest

By **Elyse Kaner** on May 25, 2013 at 7:00 am

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A Spring Lake Park District 16 Lighthouse Program student has scored a state win in the 2013 National History Day in Minnesota state competition.

Maddie Lee, 16, a third-year student in the program, took first place in the senior individual website category for her "Night of Terror: Turning the Tide of the American Women's Suffrage Movement."

The awards were presented May 4 at the University of Minnesota. The theme for this year's contest was Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events.

"Every subject I learn, I fall in love with," said Maddie in an interview at her school. For her website, she explores the subjects of women's rights, suffragettes and American feminist Alice Paul that caught her attention and became the central focus.

She appreciates voters' rights

Maddie has always been fascinated with the early 1900s, so it was only natural that she was drawn to her topic.

In addition to learning about women's rights and the hardships women underwent long ago, in creating the website Maddie learned another valuable lesson.

"I don't feel like I'll ever take my right to vote for granted when I get the right to vote in two years," she said.



Maddie Lee, a third-year student in District 16's Lighthouse Program, took first place in a website category, in the 2013 National History Day in Minnesota state competition. Photo by Elyse Kaner

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For Maddie, who describes herself as an organized person, the contest was both fun and challenging. The best part of creating the website was when she added the music to her site.

She selected the choral piece, "The March of the Women," written by English composer Ethel Smyth.

Maddie started and ended her web presentation with the powerful piece (written in 1911), which became an anthem of the women's suffrage movement.

"I chose it because it had a really big emotional impact on me and I hoped it would have it on the viewers of the website, too," Maddie said.

"It gave me a sense of unity with the suffragettes of the past."

The contest's website category called for a 1,200 student-written word limit. Compressing the hours and hours of information Maddie had gathered proved to be quite a task, she said, but she managed to work into the website her own words, along with the music, quotes, photographs and a bibliography.

Making the website has given Maddie a newly found confidence in her research abilities to create projects, she said.

Maddie's mother, Ellen Silverman, saw her daughter work countless hours on her laptop researching the project. She's a hard worker, incredibly curious and a bit of a perfectionist, Silverman said. She also loves to read.

"All of those things together made her want to learn more," she said.

The project enhanced Maddie's time management skills, Silverman said. "I think she's really learned how to plan," she said.

Second win in contest

Maddie chose her suffrage movement topic in December 2012. She started researching in January. Contest entries were due in mid-March. Most of her research was done at school, she said.

This is Maddie's second year in a row as a state History Day winner. Last year, she took second place in the contest for a website she created on Chinese history, titled "The May 4th Movement," about a 1919 cultural movement in China. She advanced to national competition, where she competed at the University of Maryland, but she did not make it in the finals.

Still, she learned so much at nationals about web design last year, that this year she changed her project strategy. She knew more of what the judges were looking for. Last year her site was content heavy, she said. This year, she added more images and quotes, enhancing the quality of her multi-media presentation.

Maddie's state win this year advances her to national competition again in Maryland. Instead, she has chosen to remain in Minnesota and honor a prior commitment she made to dance in Minnesota Dance Theatre's spring, end-of-the-year showcase.

Maddie takes part in a pre-professional ballet program and trains six days a week. She started dance lessons at the age of nine.

Although she won't compete in the national history competition, history remains near



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and dear to Maddie's heart.

"History Day has been an incredibly valuable experience for me," she said. In addition to teaching her to love history, "it's taught me about myself and about what I'm capable of," Maddie said.

She is now more aware of women's rights issues.

"As a woman going into society, I feel a lot more informed now," she said.

Maddie is the daughter of Silverman and John Lee.

National History Day in Minnesota is co-sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society and the University of Minnesota.

To view Maddie Lee's winning website, visit www.springlakeparkschools.org.

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Tags: history day, maddie lee, Spring Lake Park District 16

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