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KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

Ms. Myla S. Liljemark named 2021 Alaska History Teacher of the Year

Soldotna, August 19, 2020—Ms. Myla S. Liljemark, a teacher at Seward Middle School is beginning her seventeenth year as an educator in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, and is the 2021 Alaska History Teacher of the Year! The annual award is presented by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to K-12 American history education.

Ms. Liljemark said, “The word ‘Geschichte’ means ‘history’ in the German language. Geschichte also has another meaning in German. Its other translation is ‘story.’ History is a collection of stories that can be told from the innumerable perspectives that make up the individuals and groups of people that have inhabited our world over time and place. Throughout human history, stories have acted as the sinew that bind us to each other and that help us to better understand who we are. My interest in history is sparked through the exploring and sharing of those stories!”

Liljemark’s fascination with history is closely tied to her experiences living and traveling overseas. She explains, “Witnessing historical events first-hand and seeing the impacts of past events on the lives of people in our world today has helped me to understand the vital importance of historical awareness. In 1989, my family and I moved to Germany where, shortly after our arrival, we witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through my family’s visit to Berlin, where we pounded pieces off the Wall, and after witnessing the impacts of reunification on my German neighbors, I became aware of and fascinated by the complexities of history and the impact that historic events, policies, and people can have on a society. This front-row seat to history as well many other experiences that I had over the ten years I spent living in Europe has helped develop my world-view that an understanding of history is key to appreciating the many perspectives that make up our world today.”

Parents, students, teachers, and administrators nationwide nominated a record 8,510 teachers for the 2021 History Teacher of the Year Award. Amidst a very competitive field, Ms. Liljemark rose to the top in Alaska. Inaugurated in 2004, the History Teacher of the Year Award highlights the crucial importance of history education by honoring exceptional American history teachers from elementary school through high school. The award honors one K-12 teacher from each state, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense schools and US Territories. In fall 2021, the National History Teacher of the Year will be

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selected from the 2021 pool of fifty-three finalists for the \$10,000 National History Teacher of the Year Award. Ten finalists will be announced on September 9, 2021, and the winner of the national competition will be announced later that month.

“The advice I would give to my younger self is the same advice that I give to my student teachers,” said Ms. Liljemark. “Always find ways for students to relate to and connect with the content on a personal level. Create opportunities for students to bridge the gap between history and the present day. Globalize your approach to teaching history, as the similarities between societies around the world and over time are more profound than their differences. Build confidence in students by teaching them to analyze and communicate their ideas both verbally and in writing. Empower students with the skills and knowledge to be involved members of our society and to make a difference in our world.”

Finally, her favorite part of each day as a history teacher is “to watch students make connections between the content of our class and the world outside of our classroom. It is rewarding to witness students finding relevance between skills and content explored in class and their own lives.”

Congratulations to Ms. Myla S. Liljemark, the 2021 Alaska History Teacher of the Year! #HTOY

Links

[Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#)

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Ms. Myla S. Liljemark, Seward Middle School

2021 Alaska History Teacher of the Year!

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