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NEWS RELEASE

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Oregon Educator Nominated for National History Day® Teacher of the Year

Portland, OR — April 11, 2022 — The Oregon Historical Society has nominated Emily Rao, a social sciences teacher at Butte Creek Elementary in Mt. Angel, Oregon, for the Patricia Behring Teacher of the Year Award for her work with students on the [Oregon History Day program](#), an affiliate of the [National History Day® Contest](#). The National History Day® (NHD) award is sponsored by Patricia Behring in recognition of the pivotal role teachers play in the lives of students.

Each of the 58 National History Day® affiliates may nominate an exceptional educator for this \$10,000 award. Every nominee is a teacher who demonstrates a commitment to engaging students in historical learning through the innovative use of primary sources, implementation of active learning strategies to foster historical thinking skills, and participation in the National History Day® Contest. All nominees receive \$500 for being nominated.

“This award recognizes the very best educators from across the nation and beyond,” said National History Day® Executive Director Dr. Cathy Gorn. “These educators are leaders and innovators in the teaching of history, and we are all the more impressed because of the extended difficult teaching circumstances due to the pandemic during the last year. I wish to congratulate Emily Rao on her well-deserved nomination.”

The national winner will be selected by a committee of experienced teachers and historians, and announced on Saturday, June 18, 2022, at the National History Day® National Contest Awards Ceremony to be held virtually due to COVID-19. Nominees’ work must clearly illustrate the development and use of creative teaching methods that engage students in history and help them make exciting discoveries about the past.

Established in 1974, National History Day® engages more than a half-million students and 30,000 teachers annually. Students conduct original research on historical topics of interest and present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or

website. Students 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 Crown Family Foundation, The Better Angels Society, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, and the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation.

Rao decided to get her students involved with Oregon History Day in 2018 at the fall Oregon Council for the Social Studies Conference after it checked all the boxes for how she wanted her students to interact with history. As Rao recalls:

The conference was in October and I started my projects with my students in November. I spent the time between learning and drafting my plans for how I was going to begin this with my students and hit the ground running. It was my first full year teaching, and my students were willing to go on this journey with me!

Oregon History Day's flexible project-based curriculum complements students' varying challenges and strengths. Rao's high-achieving students make their projects as grandiose as they want to, while her ELD students use it to explore sources accessible to them and as a guide for analyzing documents and creating final projects. Rao further explained:

The program is so successful at engaging students because they can take a deep-dive into a specific topic and be able to really develop their critical thinking skills within a topic that students are passionate about as well as learn skills that they can use now, and for the rest of their lives — important skills like finding reliable resources, supporting ideas with evidence, and citing those sources. The program drives the work my students do as well as the learning we do when we are not working on Oregon History Day projects.

For more information on National History Day®, visit nhd.org. For details on how to get involved with Oregon History Day, visit ohs.org/oregonhistoryday.

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state's collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon's history open and accessible to all. We exist because

history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon's cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.