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Students compete in pilot history bee

By TOM FAURE THE JOURNAL NEWS
THE JOURNAL NEWS
(Original publication: June 10, 2006)

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Top contestants at Isaac Young Middle School didn't get it, either. It was the final question in a pilot competition in American history held yesterday as part of a National Endowment for the Humanities initiative.

Isaac Young and Albert Leonard Middle School played host yesterday to Peter Gibbon, a senior research scholar at Boston University School of Education, who is overseeing the project, meant to produce greater knowledge and appreciation for American history nationwide. The pilot will also be run in Ohio, California, and other New York schools.

"I picked New Rochelle because I wanted a wide range of students who were ready for a rigorous exam," he said. "The NEH hopes it'll go national. Mount Vernon has already volunteered to host the finals."

In late May, eighth-graders took a written qualifying test and the top 10 scorers made it to yesterday's competition. They received a certificate and a book. The winner and runner-up also received \$100 and \$50, respectively.

"They're great," social studies teacher Tony Martino said of his students, adding, "It was good preparation for the (state) assessment tests they took a few days ago."

Gibbon said the questions were chosen very carefully, "designed to hit on intellectual, diplomatic, military — all kinds of history."

The first three rounds, each student took turns taking on questions projected on a screen, accompanied by helpful illustrations. Students were eliminated after three wrong answers. In further rounds the remaining competitors used individual whiteboards to answer a question directed at the group. The questions focused at first on Colonial America and moved forward to the Vietnam War and modern America, gradually increasing in difficulty.

"We will end up with two finalists ... then tap

History bee

Can you answer the questions thrown at New Rochelle middle-schoolers yesterday? Here are some samples. For others, please go to www.lohud.com/education

1. What Native American translator helped struggling Pilgrims grow Indian corn and fertilize with fish?
2. John Rolfe created this staple Virginia crop, called by James I a 'smoking weed.'
3. Jamestown was founded in
 - a) 1635
 - b) 1527
 - c) 1607
4. What Native American princess served as intermediary between Powhatan and John Smith, later marrying John Rolfe?
5. Name the author of this pamphlet (exhibiting picture of "Common Sense" parchment).
6. Name the plantation home of George Washington.
7. Who said, 'Give me liberty or give me death'?
8. Francis Scott Key composed the lyrics to this song in 1814.
9. Name the canal built between 1817 and 1825 to connect Buffalo and the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.
10. What is the name of the home of our third president?
11. The Louisiana Purchase was made in
 - a) 1776
 - b) 1803
 - c) 1833
12. The Civil War begins with the Confederate bombing of what fort?
13. Where was Abraham Lincoln assassinated?
14. The U.S. acquired what Pacific Islands as a result of the Spanish-American war?
15. The most powerful banker of the late 1800s was J. Pierpont _____?
16. What year was the Transcontinental Railroad completed?

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into a set of questions considered 'very hard,'" Gibbon warned.

Students who had taken the exam but hadn't qualified sat in the audience. They greeted those eliminated with loud whispers of "good job!" Suddenly only two remained: Gabe Sanchez and Elijah Bracey.

The last question was too difficult for either, giving Bracey his third strike. Sanchez won.

"I didn't study at all!" said the proud and slightly surprised champion. He added that history was his favorite subject, "so you can make decisions in the future."

At Albert Leonard Middle School, David Greenburgh won first place that morning, with Eric Markovitz placing second.

Gibbon hopes American history will reach the popularity the national spelling bee has garnered with books, a movie, and countless re-enactments in classrooms.

Contestant Sujoy Khasnavis participated for the prizes and because he enjoys classroom jeopardy.

Though his favorite subject is science, he said of history, "It's important because it's nice to know who influences you and how you came to be."

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- a) 1900
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19. What disease forced FDR to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life?

20. "We're eyeball to eyeball and I think the other fellow just blinked," said Secretary of State Dean Rusk in 1962 describing the most dangerous conflict of the Cold War. What was the conflict?

21. What was the name of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union that developed after World War II?

22. A female such as Martha Ballard who helped women give birth was known as a _____.

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To what battle does this poem refer?

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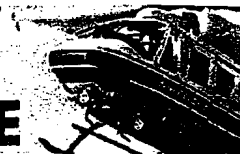
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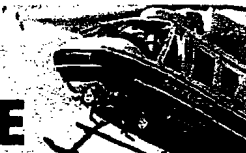
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