

A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE *by Petra Jodelis*

The Michigan History Day (National History Day in Michigan) academic program is a wonderful way for elementary and secondary school students to learn about and understand the past. Some would say participating is addictive! It has been for my daughter, Caroline Yapp (pictured), who entered her first History Day competition when she was in fifth grade in Kazoo School. Her project was an individual performance based on Eleanor Roosevelt's achievements in human rights.



Now, as a sophomore at Hackett Catholic Central High School, Caroline is preparing to compete in her fourth-straight national contest with an exhibit entitled “Men Behind Barbed Wire: The Rights of POWs during WWII and the Geneva Convention.” The Michigan History Day program offers students, like Caroline, a wonderful opportunity to learn about history in a hands-on, self-motivated, all-encompassing manner.

Each year, I have watched Caroline grow as an academic and hone her critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. The National History Day annual theme offers great opportunities for students to choose historical topics that interest them. Caroline, each year, picks her topic and then starts reading everything she can find that's relative to the project. In a sense, she becomes an expert and educates the rest of the family on the nuances of her topic during our dinnertime conversation. By the end of a year's worth of research, the entire family is richer for the experience.

History Day participation has helped Caroline learn to conduct research and really “dig” for credible facts and sources. Archives, libraries, and museums are all great resources for gaining knowledge. However, the one area Caroline has found most rewarding is her experience with the oral history interviews. Actually meeting and talking to those who participated and witnessed the event has helped bring the history to life.

I think Caroline's involvement with the Michigan History Day program has helped her grow and mature into a self-confident, curious, and lifelong learner. Caroline has learned to analyze, interpret information, and draw conclusions. I would encourage all students to participate in the History Day competition. It is a life-altering experience—my daughter will never forget it.