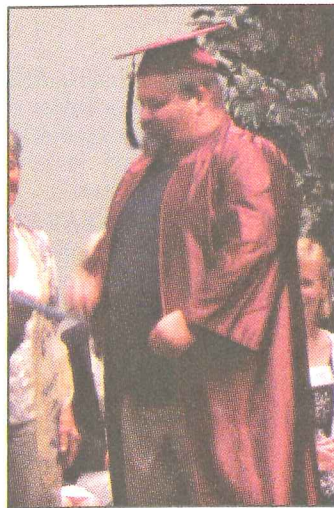


# EDUCATION

## ge Graduation 2014



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## Pier Middle School's Vanessa Miller wins History Teacher of the Year Award

By KENDRA LOLIO

**NARRAGANSETT** - Narragansett resident and Pier Middle School teacher Vanessa Miller has won the Patricia Behring History Teacher of the Year award from the National History Day organization. Miller was selected as one of two teachers within the state who have demonstrated a commitment to promoting student interest in history. Each state involved chooses two recipients from teachers who are participating in the National History Day Contest, and this year Miller will represent Rhode Island alongside Edward Kimmerlein, a History teacher at Warwick Veterans High School.

An enrichment teacher, Miller was nominated by a student for the award because of her passion for promoting the important of history and getting students excited about the subject. The school will be sending several students to the national contest and the high school will be sending one. The middle school participants are Ella Mushen and Sidney Pimental for the "Junior Group Documentary" category; Shannon O'Connell, Alexandra Provost, and Jake Archambault for "Junior Group Website"; and Hailey Martin, Julia Parenteau, and Isabel Chamberlain for the "Junior Group Exhibit."

Because the high school does not actually participate in the contest, one of Miller's former students, now a freshman at NHS, Amanda Carberry, decided to take it on independently

alongside with Miller as her mentor. Her students focused on project topics such as the Rwandan Genocide and Irish Immigration among other monumental chapters of history. Under Miller's mentorship, four of her students went on to the state championship and one went on to nationals.

"We had a really wonderful year. We had great projects and kids," said Miller.

Miller received her Bachelor's degree from URI in English Language Arts and Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Gifted Education and Talent Development from the University of Connecticut. Prior to Narragansett Pier Middle School, Miller worked for The Sage School in Massachusetts, a private institution focused on gifted education. She also worked for a Providence-based non-profit for a number of years working with students in theater enrichment.

Having worked for the middle school for the past five years, Miller expressed feeling a sense of community among her colleagues and fellow teachers.

"I really like working at the middle school level because of the opportunity we get to collaborate with our fellow teachers in order to give the students the best possible opportunities they can have to learn the way that they need to," Miller explained.

"I get to work in all different subject areas and with all different grade levels involving co-teaching, small group extension projects, and introduce them to

things outside the curriculum," said Miller.

She explained the start of her history endeavors as being something for the students to simply "try out."

"History day was originally just something we did in one of my group's classes like an experiment," said Miller. "And after I did it for one year I presented it to the eighth-grade social studies teacher here and he tried it out and then the following year the whole eighth grade did it and then the next year the seventh grade did it too."

The teacher of 11 years is very humbled to have received this award and to have been chosen out of a large pool of great educators.

"It was amazing. It was such a cool feeling because I put a lot of time and investment into this and it's a project that I've really grown to love. It's amazing to see what the kids learn and how passionate they become about these projects. It was really, really nice that a student nominated me. It was so sweet," said Miller. "The administration has always been really supportive of growing this project. My principal absolutely loves National History Day so she's been a big part of growing it at the Pier school."

Miller hopes to recruit more students in future years to be part of the National History Day contest and will continue to encourage and promote interest in history.

## AND TICK BITES

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### LECTURE!

Specialist Fredric Silverblatt, MD

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use Lyme disease

Tuesday, June 24

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

## Canadian to finish 2300km swim challenge at Narragansett Beach

By KENDRA LOLIO  
NARRAGANSETT