

Johansen Named RI History Teacher of the Year

The award recognizes history teachers who demonstrate a commitment to their field, creativity and the ability to use primary sources to engage students.

By [Lauren Costa](#) | October 4, 2012



Lisa Johansen, a teacher at [Coventry High School](#) has been named the [2012 Rhode Island History Teacher of the Year](#). The award was presented Sept. 18 by the [Rhode Island Foundation](#) during a ceremony at a school faculty meeting.

Johansen has been teaching U.S. History at Coventry High School since 1999 and before that had taught middle school social studies in the district for eight years. A Rhode Island College graduate, Johansen completed her master's degree in history at Providence College and

continues to work closely with RIC mentoring a new teacher each year.

She teaches all levels of U.S. history at the high school, is a co-coordinator of the school's History Day and is the advisor for the History Club. Last June, Johansen and one of her Advanced Placement history students were selected to be one of only 15 student/teacher teams for a [National History Day project called Normandy: Sacrifice for Freedom](#), a project that included stops in Maryland and Washington, D.C., before heading to Normandy, France to honor the soldiers they studied.

"I feel very honored and pleased to have been recognized this way," said Johansen. "I am very thankful to my students because they really enjoy history as much as I do and share my passion, which makes teaching so enjoyable."

Johansen will receive a \$1,000 prize and will be in the running to be named the national 2012 History Teacher of the Year. She will also have the opportunity to further her studies at a summer teaching institute and will have a core archive of history books and educational materials given to the Coventry High School library in her name. The History Teacher of the Year Award is co-sponsored by The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Preserve America and HISTORY™.

To be considered for the honor, Johansen had to demonstrate a commitment to teaching American history (including state and local history), effectively use documents, artifacts, historic sites, oral histories, and other primary resources to engage students, show evidence of creativity and imagination in the classroom and have had at least three years of classroom teaching experience. She was nominated by former student Emily Fisher and [Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School](#) social studies teacher Susan Squillante.

During her time as RI History Teacher of the Year, Johansen plans on continuing to do a successful job teaching her students and hopes to bring back to her classroom everything she learns while studying at the summer teaching institute. She expressed the importance of being able to present students with primary sources, something she was happy to be able to do during her time in Normandy.

"I feel lucky that I teach so many really good students who have a sincere interest in history and that fuels my passion," Johansen said. "I've found that even when it's a challenge to get some students interested in history, it definitely helps to give them primary sources - something they can look at and know that it's real - that's important and sometimes will ignite their interest."

The award earned by Johansen is designed to promote and celebrate the teaching of American history in classrooms across the U.S. It honors one exceptional K-12 teacher of American history from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense schools and U.S. Territories. The national 2012 History Teacher of the Year will be chosen by a panel of judges comprised of former national winners, renowned historians, professors and teachers and then honored in a fall ceremony.