

MAKING HISTORY



Photos by Kendra Gravelle

Coventry High's Shori Ruscito, right, is presented the 2019 Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Rhode Island History Teacher of the Year Award by Geralyn Ducady of the Rhode Island Historical Society during an assembly Monday morning.

Coventry High's Ruscito earns statewide honor for education

By KENDRA GRAVELLE

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COVENTRY — In front of Rhode Island's general treasurer and lieutenant governor, various school administrators, her students and her fellow teachers, Coventry High School teacher Shori Ruscito on Monday was officially presented with the 2019 Rhode Island History Teacher of the Year award.

"I love history, and I'm so very lucky to be able to teach history and to be able to share that with you, as well," Ruscito said Monday morning during a surprise assembly held in her honor.

Ruscito, who teaches courses in American government and American and state history, learned over the summer that she would be receiving the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History's history teacher of the year award for Rhode Island.

Before handing her a couple of citations, Lt. Gov. Daniel J. McKee and General Treasurer Seth Magaziner each took the podium to congratulate Ruscito for receiving the prestigious designation.

"There's 39 cities and towns in the state of Rhode Island, and right here in Coventry we're making history today, by recognizing one of your favorite teachers," McKee said, standing before several rows of students in the high school auditorium.

For Magaziner, whose first job after college was as an elementary history teacher, Ruscito's passion for teaching history is particularly



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Lt. Gov. Daniel J. McKee hands a citation to Ruscito.

History

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meaningful. He said it was his own education in American history that inspired him to begin a career in government.

"A really great teacher doesn't just educate, doesn't just tell you the facts," Magaziner said. "A really great teacher inspires her students."

"I suspect there are some future historians and some future history teachers in the room today, but I also imagine that the education that you all are getting from Mrs. Ruscito could inspire you in any number of different ways," Magaziner continued, looking out at the students just before Ruscito was officially presented the award.

Established to recognize the importance of history education, the history teacher of the year award is presented annually by the Gilder Lehrman Institute to one teacher from each state plus the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense schools and each U.S. territory. From those teachers, a national winner will

be selected.

The high school's auditorium echoed with applause Monday, as GERALYN DUCADY, director of education at the Rhode Island Historical Society, officially presented Ruscito with the award.

A 2008 graduate of Coventry High School, Ruscito has been teaching at the school since shortly after graduating from the University of Rhode Island in 2012.

Though her interest in history was founded early on, having grown up in a family that shares her love for history, Ruscito has attributed her passion for the subject at least in part to Coventry High School teacher Lisa Johansen, who herself was named the Rhode Island History Teacher of the Year in 2012.

Johansen stood Monday to share a few words about Ruscito, who 15 years ago was a sophomore in her class. Johansen reflected on Ruscito's sense of humor, her curiosity and her passion for history, even as a high school student.

Recalling a "meticulously researched" project Ruscito had done as a high

school junior, Johansen attributed Ruscito's success as a teacher in part to her constant desire to improve.

"She spends endless hours designing engaging lessons," she said, adding that Ruscito is "generous with her time and her knowledge."

Still, Ruscito's greatest strength, Johansen suggested, lies in her ability to "readily name the strengths of any one of her students."

"Because she understands all of her students' abilities so thoroughly and to such an individual degree, she makes each student feel like they are unique and a valuable asset to her," she said.

Johansen added that she admires Ruscito's constant efforts to instill a love of history within each of her students.

"Her love of history, her love for her students, and her love for her job, shines through during each of her classes and showcases her remarkable qualifications for history teacher of the year," she continued.

And apparently her students agree.

"We have known Mrs. Ruscito for over a year now, and have never met a nicer, funnier and more caring teacher," student Emma Maccarone said.

Holding onto a bunch of flowers to give to Ruscito, Maccarone praised her teacher for her passion and her constant positivity.

"We are all truly grateful to know Mrs. Ruscito as a person and to have her as a teacher," Paige Collins chimed in. "Going into history as freshmen, we were all very scared and nervous

about what the year had to offer. Right off the bat, Mrs. Ruscito made everyone feel less nervous and much more confident."

From the Rhode Island Department of Education, Lisa Foehr, chief of teaching and learning, spoke about the strong link between "excellent educators" and student learning outcomes.

"Mrs. Ruscito is a perfect example of that," Foehr said. "Her love of history, her passion for teaching is on display in her classroom every single day."

Superintendent Craig Lewis echoed the importance of having high quality educators like Ruscito.

"All of our teachers are the greatest resource we have," he said. "Research says that what makes a difference in a child's life is

having that significant person in front of them. Sometimes it's family members or a relative, but many times it's an educator."

And to wrap up the celebration, Principal Brooke Macomber played a slide show she'd created for the event. In between recent photographs of her teaching and old photos of her as a Coventry High School student, video clips showed Ruscito's fellow teachers sharing the words they'd use to describe her — words like "dedicated," "nerd," "humble" and "passionate."

"I have seen so many sides of Mrs. Ruscito," Macomber said, as Monday's assembly drew to an end. "She is such an asset to our school for what she does for kids in and out of the classroom."

Five-day Weather Forecast

Today



Thickening clouds, light

Wednesday



Chance for early

Thursday



Sunny and seasonable.

Friday



Increasing cloudiness.

Saturday



Chance for early