

SHS students honor fallen WWII soldiers

Written by

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Students at Salem High School spent several months earlier in the school year learning about soldiers who were killed in action during World War II, and then developed websites to honor the memory and celebrate the lives of these fallen war heroes.

The participants were all members of Mark McKay's history classes at the high school. McKay says the research was assigned in the spirit of the Silent Heroes Project, a organization which encourages students across the country to honor fallen World War II heroes from their own states through web design.

The first step for each group was to pick a soldier's name off the national registry. Some of the students said that the list they had to choose from was rather vague. "When you're looking at the list you know his name and that he was in the army, and that's about it," said Wade La Hue. But diligence

"We each researched different people, and then voted on who we wanted to chose for our project," Kaileen Martin said about her class' selection process. She added that their eventual soldier, Private 1st Class Nathan Garnitz, was actually her personal choice.

Different groups based their choices on facts they dug up during their initial research. Sargent George Williams was chosen because he had earned the silver star. Another group picked Captain Altus McReynolds because he was part of the 101st Airborne Division.

For some, researching deeper into their backgrounds was a hit or miss prospect for a while. "We didn't find anything at first, it was four weeks of nothing," said Taylor Overshine. His group didn't catch a break finding biographical information on Corporal James Young until they happened upon his sister's contact information.

"You look up different aspects of his life," explained Katherine La Hue. "Family, military career, where he lived." La Hue explained they found out some cool facts about PFC Garnitz's life during their research, including that his family was originally from Russia.

La Hue, along with Martin and the rest of McKay's 3rd period class, worked on Private Garnitz's website together. "You pick a different category and find what you cant," Miranda Wrigley said of having the research process divided between an entire class. McKay's 4th period class split into three groups to work on the remaining websites.

The students started researching back in August of last year, and their finished websites went live in February. It was a tough assignment, but ultimately a rewarding one.

"There was nothing extraordinary about these men,' McKay said of the soldiers his students chose to study, 'but they served their country." He said it was important for them to learn about the unsung heroes of America's wars, the average men who willingly gave up their lives to protect their country from oppressive powers on the other side of the world.

"These aren't just names," Emily Hammontree, a member of Young's group, remarked. "They all have a back story."

Following are the web addresses to all four websites designed by Mark McKay's classes.

<http://46224187.nhd.weebly.com>

Private 1st Class Nathan Garnitz's website, created by McKay's U.S. History Honors class.

<http://16526824.nhd.weebly.com>

Corporal James Young's website, created by Danielle, Emily, Hannah, Jeremy, Taylor, and Wade.

<http://67742480.nhd.weebly.com>

Captain Altus McReynolds' website, created by Brandon, Chance, Evan, and Jason.

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<http://63891950.nhd.weebly.com>

Staff Sargent George Williams' website, created by Allison, Elizabeth, Jordan, Liz, Taylor, and Treasure.