

History Day returns to Southeast

By Kayla Gaffney

The Southeast Missouri State University Department of History will host History Day Friday. History Day is an annual event that brings hundreds of middle-school and high-school students to campus for a competition. The top winners move on to the state competition, and those winners move on to the national competition.

Students from all across the region are invited to participate in this event. The competition is divided into categories, including exhibits, performances, papers, documentaries and websites. Typically, the exhibit category receives the most submissions, but there also is a high number of websites this year according to Laurie Hamblin, instructor of history and event coordinator for History Day.

"Most of them do exhibits; the vast majority do exhibits. But we have a lot of websites this year -- an amazing number," Hamblin said. "We have 60 websites just in the junior division."

History Day has been held by the history department since the early 1970s and has continued to be a way to get students involved with history and with the university. There will be 490 students participating in the event this year.

"It's good for history, it's good for regional history, it's good that the students get to see a university, a lot of them have never been to a university before," Hamblin said. "I think it's good for the students in the region to get an encounter with history and to be exposed to their fellow students' work, too."

The exhibits, papers and performances will be judged in the University Center, while the documentaries and websites will be judged in Carnahan Hall. There will be 60 or more judges for the event, including Southeast students, faculty and staff.

Many of the students judging this event come from the Social Studies Educators Association, a student organization devoted to social studies education.

"I'm looking forward to interacting with students," Megan Drennan, SSEA president, said. "I'm excited -- if I'm watching the reenactments or skits, that will be really exciting or just going around looking at the displays."

According to Dr. Joel Rhodes, professor of history and former event coordinator, Southeast's History Day has traditionally brought out the largest number of students compared to other regions in the state.

"I can't speak for the last several years, but we were always the largest of the state contests," Rhodes said. "Some regions don't have 100 people; we've got 500 people, more or less, any given year."

This event is designed as a way to get middle-school and high-school students excited about history by competing in a competition, and it also is a way to connect the students to the university.

"We try to give every student information about the university," Dr. Courtney Kisat, assistant professor of history and secondary education, said. "So they don't have to major in history, but if they're interested in setting up an advising appointment or coming to an orientation then we make sure to give them information about that."

There are different awards for winners in the contest such as plaques or trophies, and the senior individual exhibit winner is awarded a scholarship to Southeast. The scholarship pays for tuition and fees for one year and is renewable, so it can be turned into a four-year scholarship.