

Chippewa Valley students take history trip from Gettysburg to D.C.

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Chippewa Valley High School students, from left, Jeanna Brown, Zachary Collin, Jack Binder, Elena Miller; teacher Brian Eovaldi, and student Lindsay Scott pose with a wreath that was placed on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during a class trip.

Photo courtesy of Brian Eovaldi

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A group of four of Brian Eovaldi's AP United States history students placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery.

Photo courtesy of Brian Eovaldi

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Hands-on learning can help students get a better understanding of what they are studying, and it is commonly done in high school science classrooms.

But Chippewa Valley High School history teacher Brian Eovaldi has taken that technique and applied it to the past by taking his students on a trip through history from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to Washington, D.C.

From Oct. 30 to Nov. 4, Eovaldi took 36 of his Advanced Placement United States history students to Gettysburg, Washington, D.C., and Charlottesville and Williamsburg in Virginia. A group of students also had a chance to present a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

“The purpose is to essentially reinforce and reiterate things we have been learning in the classroom, and this time of year, it is early American history,” Eovaldi said. “They can walk in the footsteps of our founding fathers and better grasp the information. It is more relevant when they actually walk through these significant historical sites.”

Eovaldi has taken a group of mostly high school juniors on this trip since 2005. He said it is nonstop from the time they leave Monday morning until they come back home at the end of the week.

Talking to past students who have been on the trip, Eovaldi said he commonly hears it was a highlight for many students during their time at Chippewa Valley. The students also get a chance to eat food from the time period, such as peanut soup.

“There is almost no down time, and the focus is on everything educational, even down to the food,” Eovaldi said. “They can really immerse themselves in the historical period.”

This was the first time visiting all these sites for Chippewa Valley junior Elena Miller. She said her favorite activity was visiting Gettysburg, an important site of the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War in 1863.

“I really wanted to appreciate the history of our country and the values we were founded on,” Miller said. “To stand in the same spot that 50,000 people died, that is pretty powerful.”

Miller was also one of four students who had the chance to place the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns just outside of Washington, D.C.

Eovaldi said he wanted to visit the tomb to show his students that even those who have served in the military and don't have monuments or memorials deserve to be honored and respected.

Miller said that it was an honor to be able to be one of the students to present the wreath.

“It was nice to be able to represent the community and reflect on the different sacrifices strangers have made for the country,” she said. “That was a big thing for us to do.”

Coming back to Clinton Township and the classroom, Eovaldi said he feels that going on the trip gives his students a unique opportunity to learn about the past.

“Not only are they understanding the information and appreciating it a little more, but they literally can say they have been on the battlefield of Gettysburg,” he said. “They got to walk down the streets of colonial Williamsburg and understand the ins and outs of a battlefield. They got to see where a lot of events took place in the 18th century as America was getting ready to declare its independence.”