



## COLLIER EDUCATOR GRANT "STAND UP FOR JUSTICE"

*Sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Collier County*

An annual grant will be made to the educator whose lesson(s) and/or activity(s) is selected as best meeting the criteria below. The purpose of this grant is to honor Collier County elementary, middle, and high school educators who strive to counter the prevailing tendency within today's popular culture for students to deride or denigrate others based upon difference. The lesson(s) or activity(s) should have as its major objective the purpose of instilling the positive character trait of "respect for others" in students. All applicants must have created lessons and/or activities of their own design or have successfully made adaptations from other programs and should be able to show evidence of a positive nature as a result of implementation. Successful applicants will be contacted and asked to submit a copy of the lesson(s) or activity(s) from the current school year, a description of its implementation, and evidence of its effectiveness. Applicants may include Collier County elementary, middle, and high school teachers, guidance counselors, school librarians, administrators, psychologists, and media specialists. Students, parents, colleagues, and community members are encouraged to nominate an educator. Self-nominations are also encouraged and accepted.

Applicant's name: Victoria Peterson  
Applicant's email: petersvi@collierschools.com  
Number of years teaching: 47  
Grade or subject taught: 8<sup>th</sup> English Language Arts  
School: Oakridge Middle School  
School Address: 14445 Collier Blvd. Naples, FL 33912  
Phone (daytime): 239-377-4889 Phone (evening): 239-768-0630

On a separate page(s) with the name of the applicant on each page, please briefly:

- Describe the precipitating events that motivated you to initiate these lessons or activities.
- Describe the lesson(s) or activity(s); and if adapted from another source please reference.
- Explain how the lesson(s) or activity(s) teach students the importance of respecting others no matter what religious, racial, cultural, or other differences exist.
- Explain how it helped them counter bigotry and bullying and prepared them to stand up for justice.

If your application is selected as a finalist, you may be asked to provide evidence/proof of effectiveness such as but not limited to: a questionnaire, interviews, documented anecdotal conversations and/or observations, and etc.

Please complete the following if you have encouraged someone other than yourself to apply:

Your name: Same  
Your email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (daytime): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (evening): \_\_\_\_\_  
Your relationship to applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Submit the completed form in writing, by email, or video format no later than  
February 15, 2016 to: **Beth Povlow, Educator Grant Coordinator**  
**C/o JCRC, Jewish Federation of Collier County**  
**2500 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Suite #2201, Naples, FL 34109**

Collier Educator Grant "Stand up for Justice"

Victoria Peterson

Oakridge Middle School

14975 Collier Blvd.

Naples, Florida 33912

As part of the eighth grade English language arts curriculum, I teach about the Holocaust. Each year, I search for innovative ways to educate and expose the students to this horrific time in our world's history. This is an opportunity for the students to understand the profound effect of intolerance and propaganda upon individuals and groups of people.

In 2013, I was fortunate to meet Myra Roberts and learn of her beautiful work *The Faces of Anne Frank* and her book, *Project Tolerance*. Following this body of work, Myra created *Prelude to the 1940's*, a series of collages depicting the horrors of the Holocaust. The students and I visited the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida to view these exhibits. I include this information because this exhibit made such a powerful impression on the students (I have enclosed 4 of the letters as an example) that I knew that I had to continue with these types of experiences. Last year, I invited Myra to Oakridge to talk about her works and her passion for exposing the dangers of propaganda and intolerance. Not only did Myra bring her works but she invited Steen Metz, a Holocaust survivor, and Robert Hilliard who was instrumental in acquiring assistance for survivors after the war. They all focused on the power of the individual to stand up for justice and to recognize bigotry and bullying. Myra has committed to returning again this school year and will be bringing some of her new works from *Angels of the Holocaust* and her - yet to be named works - about the Bielski Brothers.

Additionally, I would like to invite Ann Monroe Jacobs from Washington, D.C. who worked as an image researcher for Nancy Spielberg on her film, *Above and Beyond*. She is also currently working on a project about the Warsaw ghetto.

I would like to be able to compensate Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Jacobs for the time and expense to speak with the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students during March of 2016, and would use any grant money to do so.

The comments from the students about the experience of viewing the exhibit at the Holocaust museum and about the presentation last year were so thoughtful, sensitive and powerful that I want to provide our present eighth graders with this opportunity- an opportunity that cannot be duplicated by reading information from a book.



Today my class went to the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida. We saw your amazing mixed media collages in the "Prelude to the 1940's." The most powerful and touching collage that you created was "The Bulldozer" because it showed what the normal Germans were doing happily while there were many kids killed and piled up in a huge hole. All of your artwork was amazing and every single one had a really special meaning to them. When they talk about the Holocaust in class or somewhere else you don't really feel the connection to what really happened. Your work really gave me a great connection and it was touching and really makes me wonder how a group of people could do such a horrific thing to human beings. I've never felt this way about the Holocaust. So I thank you for your amazing artwork.

Dear Mrs. Roberts,

Your jaw-dropping artwork, "Prelude to the 1940's," was unbelievably awakening. It gave me a whole new perspective of how bad the Holocaust really was. It showed the true cruelty of it, and how we should always try to stop these things from ever happening again. Your artwork gave off the precise visual of what disrespect really is.

It has opened my eyes, and I've realized that anyone can do small things to make the world better. For example, I could tell someone to back off if they're bullying someone. Bullying is in a way similar to the Holocaust; it's an act of being tormented. We obviously do not want that in our society. You see if we want to live in peace we need to have respect for each other. One day my generation will be running the entire world, and the only way we can do that successfully is if we can accept each other. So, thank you for the inspiring message through your collage work.

Sincerely,  
Marco



Dear Mrs. Roberts,

Today has been more than extraordinarily sad and it's appropriate to say that I will probably never experience anything so overwhelming. That is to say, I have just come back from the Holocaust Museum with my language arts class and it has definitely changed my entire viewpoint of history. I have to admit, it was a lot to take in and the stories of the Jewish survivors was enough to make me cry a river for all of them.

The genocide, the devastating pain, the lifeless eyes of the Jews... it was as though I had stepped back into the door of that time period. It made me weak and my heart literally broke for the many Jewish people who were wrongfully murdered. The several exhibits that portrayed the unforgettable pain and harsh conditions of the Jews and the other undesirables, it made me realize that there had always been more than what you find in some history book. It's the experience, the feeling that swallows you whole like a nightmare, but then you wake up and notice that it wasn't you who had felt that; it was the wrenching guilt and constant tears that indicate the much worse situations that the Jews had to face. Even now, this whole scenario is still happening, whether we like it or not.

In reality, nothing ever fades to a memory, never ceases to exist. And I learned that when I first went to the museum. Your paintings and collages especially captured the attention of the students. Never have I felt such sorrow and devastation, and if only such a thing had never existed. But it had, and like I said before, it will never cease to haunt us. And if it does, then let us remind those who have forgotten so that incident will never occur ever again. I mean, it was beyond anything in my imagination, and it's hard to believe that only one belief had started all of this.

Most of all, I would love to thank you for your touching and emotional contribution to our society. It was as though I was there, standing among the mangled bodies of the Jews, shedding my tears for all the grieving that had resulted. Because the whole situation had burned a hole right through us and though I hadn't lived in that time period, I wish time could backtrack and make everything right again. I wish I had been there to embrace the Jews, to wipe away their bleeding tears, and hold their hands while mending their wounded hearts. Because if I were there, standing by their side, nothing would stop me from sacrificing myself so they could have one more day of their life.

Yours truly,  
Shayne



Dear Mrs. Roberts,

Today I visited your astounding exhibit, "Prelude to the 1940's." I do believe you will be receiving quite a few of these letters, and I just wanted to tell you something. Everyone's letters will probably tell you something along the lines of your artwork being inspiring, and this is very true. It was interesting and refreshing to see modern collages with a disturbing, impacting twist. It really allowed a deeper understanding of the events and sick happenings during the Holocaust. I say events, but that is a terrible word for it. There is no way to describe the Holocaust in words that does it justice. When you learn about it in a classroom, you only feel so much. It seems almost surreal. It opened my eyes to see your amazing, beautiful artwork. You, a person not of that time, but of ours. You cling onto these horrific points of time and open doors through your collages. You are someone that everyone should be, you are someone this world needs. I appreciate that.

I wanted to tell you something else. I came to a realization. Through your emotional artwork, I was struck with something incredible. The Holocaust was, is real. It isn't a bump in the road that we happened to learn about in a

history or language arts class. It is real. It is a real thing that happened, and when you think about it, it wasn't too long ago. The world and all the people in it are fragile. We can be influenced, overcome with something we can't control. Taking the trip to your exhibit today, I genuinely think that I will never be the same blind, oblivious girl I was before. The Holocaust was real.

Mrs. Myra Roberts, we will never forget, and that is certain. Your brilliant collages have sent me into a spiral that I can't seem to get out of, except I don't think I want to get out. I feel... inspired... and I thank you immensely for that. I feel like I need to share my newfound knowledge with someone, everyone! The Holocaust was terrible, horrific, deadly, disturbing. I can't even begin to think of what to call it. In fact, I did a pitiful job in describing it. The beautiful thing is, though, we learn from our past. I can't even thank you enough.

With love,

Isabella



Dear Myra Roberts,

Today my class went to the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida. We saw your amazing mixed media collages in the "Prelude to the 1940's." The most powerful and touching collage that you created was "The Bulldozer" because it showed what the normal Germans were doing happily while there were many kids killed and piled up in a huge hole. All of your artwork was amazing and every single one had a really special meaning to them. When they talk about the Holocaust in class or somewhere else you don't really feel the connection to what really happened. Your work really gave me a great connection and it was touching and really makes me wonder how a group of people could do such a horrific thing to human beings. I've never felt this way about the Holocaust. So I thank you for your amazing artwork.

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