

## **DIY HISTORY PROVIDES MUCH NEEDED RESOURCES FOR CONNECTICUT EDUCATORS** ***Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame Creates New Program, Inspires Future Leaders***

**September 30, 2015 | New Haven, CT** – The do-it-yourself craze isn't just for crafts and home improvement! The Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame developed its award-winning DIY History program both to inspire young people to "DIY" their own future and to equip Connecticut educators with the tools they need to incorporate women's perspectives into their existing curriculum. Women have made major contributions to the history of our state, our nation and our world, but their voices are too often absent from our traditional textbooks. DIY History helps educators fill in these gaps and makes the past come alive through the examples of remarkable Connecticut women whose powerful stories inspire the next generation of leaders by demonstrating the breadth of possibilities open to them.

"Rather than asking students simply to memorize a list of facts, the new DIY History program put out by the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame asks students to think critically about the past and its relationship to our contemporary world while also encouraging them to take informed action and engage in inquiry," says State of Connecticut Commissioner of Education Dianna R. Wentzell. "This program also fits right in with our emphasis on using Connecticut history to tell America's story and highlighting the important contribution of women and minorities in our history."

DIY History is designed for use with grades six through 12 and helps young people connect the past to the present as it inspires them to take an active role in shaping their future. A series of flexible, interdisciplinary educational modules that can be facilitated by classroom teachers, after-school program leaders, librarians, scout leaders, and other community educators, DIY History is based on relevant CWHF Inductees' stories. Each themed module connects women's history to the contemporary world, encouraging participants to think critically, take informed action and go deeper in their learning. Modules include a host of discussion activities, primary source materials, research options and creative projects for educators to choose from – all materials and activities are aligned with Common Core State Standards.

"Since our founding in 1994, we have consistently heard from educators across Connecticut that they want to integrate women's history into their curriculum but lack the resources necessary to do it successfully," explains Katherine Wiltshire, executive director of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. "As the state's

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premier source for women's history, we see it as our responsibility to provide innovative educational resources to help meet this need. With the rollout of our new DIY History program, we're taking our offerings to the next level and ensuring maximum impact in the lives of as many students as possible."

Three DIY History modules are available for free download at [www.cwhf.org/DIY](http://www.cwhf.org/DIY). They include *Votes for Women: Connecticut Women Changing Democracy*, *Marian Anderson: Powerful Voice for Change*, and *STEMfems: Women Transforming Our World*. The CWHF sees DIY History as a model for future expansion and currently plans to develop and launch three additional modules over the next three to five years. Future modules may include *Women's Perspectives: Changing the World through Art*, *Trailblazers: Connecticut's Pioneering Women in Business* and *Leveling the Playing Field: Connecticut's Female Athletes*.

### **More About DIY History**

The CWHF created DIY History in response to needs identified by educators. Using DIY History's series of flexible educational modules (including participant and facilitator guides) based on selected Inductees' stories, teachers and other educators can bring women's history into the lives of young people, both in and out of the classroom. Offered free of charge, each module is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and contains information about relevant CWHF Inductees as well as background information about the topic and issues. Modules also offer a host of discussion activities, research options and creative projects to encourage young people to explore the topics and issues further, connecting the past to the present while inspiring participants to use their own voices to shape their future.

The first of two pilot modules, *Votes for Women: Connecticut Women Changing Democracy*, was introduced at Connecticut's Old State House in March 2013 during Women's History Month and has since been recognized with an Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations. The second pilot module, *Marian Anderson: Powerful Voice for Change*, debuted in February 2014 at Lincoln Middle School in Meriden with nearly 300 seventh grade students.

With the fall 2015 release of *STEMfems: Women Transforming Our World*, DIY History will be a true series of modules, and the CWHF will begin rolling the program out on a regional basis beginning with a statewide

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marketing and promotional campaign targeting teachers and schools.

The CWHF is grateful for support of the DIY History program from such funders as Connecticut Humanities, the Ensworth Charitable Foundation, the Petit Family Foundation, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Ensign-Bickford Aerospace & Defense Company and United Illuminating. To learn more about DIY History and help support its future, visit [www.cwhf.org/DIY](http://www.cwhf.org/DIY).

### **About the CWHF**

The mission of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame (CWHF) is to **honor** publicly the achievements of Connecticut women, **preserve** their stories, **educate** the public and **inspire** the continued achievements of women and girls. Founded in 1994 in Hartford, the CWHF is Connecticut's premier source for women's history. Its 109 Inductees are role models for women of all ages, and their stories are proof of all that women can accomplish. The CWHF's work fosters the courage and confidence women need to overcome barriers and advocate on their own behalf. Each year, we show 50,000 women and girls what's possible and empower them to take an active role in shaping their future. The CWHF website, [www.cwhf.org](http://www.cwhf.org), is a "Virtual Hall" where visitors can explore all that CWHF has to offer. From offices located on the campus of Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, the CWHF partners with educational institutions, corporations, women's organizations and historic sites around Connecticut. To join the CWHF via social media, find and like [ctwomen on Facebook](#) and follow [@ctwomen on Twitter](#).

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### ***What is DIY History?***

DIY History embodies our primary focus of sharing women's stories to provide role models for young women. It's a new way to tell these stories and enrich the educational experiences of young people. DIY History helps young people connect the past to the present and inspires them to take an active role in shaping their future. A series of flexible, interdisciplinary educational modules that can be facilitated by classroom teachers, after-school program leaders, librarians, scout leaders and other community educators, DIY History is based on relevant Inductees' stories. Each module connects these women's stories to the contemporary world, inspiring participants to use their own voices to shape the future through a host of discussion activities, research options and creative projects all aligned with Common Core State Standards. It also dovetails very well with the new Social Studies Frameworks being introduced by the State Department of Education – there is a much greater emphasis on bringing in diverse perspectives and on exposing students to local history content. DIY History offers activities and materials that foster 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills like critical thinking and information literacy. It is an educational tool that leverages local connections to highlight milestones in women's history. There's also a great focus on helping students to take informed action ... ***what will they do with what they know?***

### ***What grade levels is it designed for?***

DIY History is designed for use with young people in grades 6-12. However, some materials and activities can be used with younger or older groups. The modular model allows each facilitator to choose content based on the interests and learning needs of his/her group.

### ***Who developed the program?***

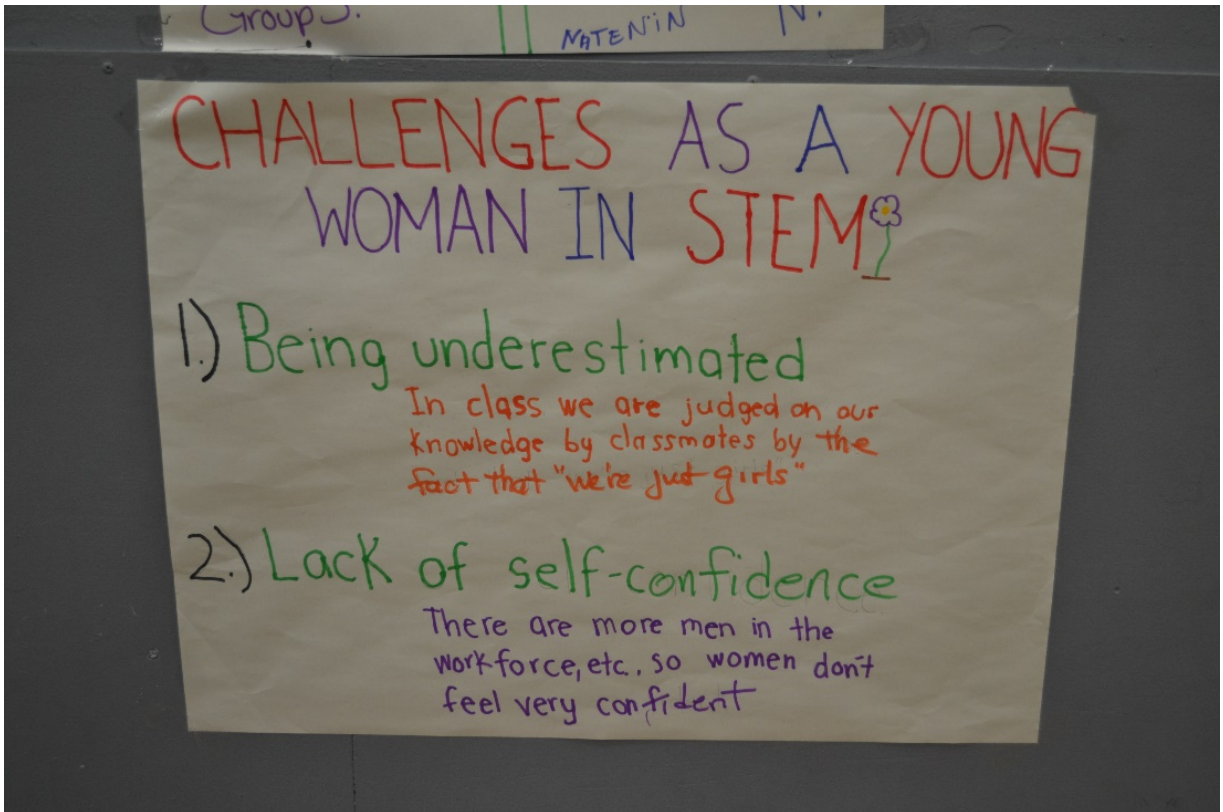
The Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame staff developed the program in collaboration with teachers, students, scholars, community educators, librarians, and others.

### ***How can teachers access it?***

DIY History modules are available at [www.cwhf.org/DIY](http://www.cwhf.org/DIY). After completing a quick registration, users can download a PDF of the desired DIY History module, choosing a facilitator guide and/or participant guide.

### ***How much does it cost?***

DIY History is offered free of charge (though donations are appreciated).







## What People are Saying about DIY History

"We highly commend the Hall of Fame for creating and making available a high quality program at no cost to teachers and web users. **This is exactly the kind of program that classroom teachers have been asking for recently.**"

– 2014 CLHO Awards Committee in recognizing Votes for Women module

"**I am a 15-year educator, and for me the DIY History program is one of those rare educational products that I can actually USE.**...I use this program now with my sophomores and am encouraging my colleagues to use it, too. The module model makes it easy to use, and the clarity and suggestions for use give the facilitator enough choices to adapt to almost any group of users."

– Wendy, High School Teacher (Washington)

"The Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame staff worked closely with educators to align DIY History with Common Core Curriculum and create material in a format that is easy-to-use for teachers...**Too often, students learn 'textbook' history—boring, one-sided and not very compelling. DIY History provides a totally different experience for teachers and students.**"

– Rebecca, Museum Educator (Hartford)

"[The program] meant a lot to me because every time I tell people what I want to do they're like, 'Ok, you can't do that because, well, you're a girl.'...And **I wanted a way to prove that I could actually do it, but I didn't have any proof. But these women are my proof, my backup!**"

– Danayit, high school student & STEMfems preview participant (New Haven)

"I learned that Alice Paul did all that she did for me and for other women to have equal opportunity in voting...Women need to know the decisions being made for them...and **it's important for women to have a voice.**"

– Zaunjeanette, High School Student & Votes for Women participant (Waterbury)

"**Partnering with the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame was an amazing experience for our students.**...Our girls don't often have women who they interact with who are in industry, and having that exposure is a very important experience!"

– Medria Blue-Ellis, Principal (New Haven)

"I think some people just assume nowadays that sexism and discrimination is over, that we don't need to deal with it anymore...And it's not true. We still have to deal with all these problems, and **we still need help learning that we can do whatever we want.**"

– Nora, high school student & STEMfems preview participant (New Haven)

"It was such an honor to have the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame come and work with my students because, especially in STEM careers and at a STEM school there are so many more men in the population and some of our girl students lose their motivation. And **I think after the program that we had here, it rejuvenated them and it re-motivated them...I think it tells them that it's possible. That's the most important thing: to tell them that it's possible.**"

– Karen Robinson, high school teacher (New Haven)

## DIY History Overview

In response to needs identified by teachers and other educators, the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame created DIY History, the newest addition to our line-up of award-winning programs. ***DIY History is a series of flexible educational modules based on selected Inductees' stories that teachers and other educators can use to bring women's history into the lives of young people, both in and out of the classroom.*** Each module is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and contains information about relevant CWHF Inductees as well as background information about the topic and issues. Modules also offer a host of discussion activities, research options and creative projects to encourage young people to explore the topics and issues further, connecting the past to the present while inspiring participants to use their own voices to shape their future. Learn more about the DIY History program at [www.cwhf.org/DIY](http://www.cwhf.org/DIY).

Each module includes a participant guide and a facilitator guide and is available free-of-charge for teachers and community educators at [www.cwhf.org/DIY](http://www.cwhf.org/DIY). A quick registration is required to access the downloadable PDF files of each module. This registration allows us to keep track of who is using the modules and contact users to get their feedback and suggestions and alert them to the publication of new or updated materials.

The first of two pilot modules, *Votes for Women: Connecticut Women Changing Democracy*, was introduced at Connecticut's Old State House in March 2013 during Women's History Month and has since been recognized with an Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations. This module highlights Connecticut suffragists including Alice Paul, Isabella Beecher Hooker and the Smith Sisters of Glastonbury and also invites participants to explore the legacy of these women through the stories of some of Connecticut's famous political firsts like Ella Grasso, Denise Nappier and Clare Boothe Luce. Through the module's suggested activities, participants are encouraged to reflect on those who fought for the rights we enjoy today, engage in the political process to address social issues they see affecting their lives, and consider ways to improve the representation of women in elected office. Learn more about this module at <http://www.cwhf.org/educational-resources/diy-history/votes>.

The second pilot module, *Marian Anderson: Powerful Voice for Change*, debuted in February 2014 at Lincoln Middle School in Meriden with nearly 300 seventh grade students. The launch coincided with Black History



Month and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Anderson's landmark concert at the Lincoln Memorial. The module helps young people explore the life and influence of legendary contralto Marian Anderson whose voice helped inspire the Civil Rights Movement. Through the module's suggested activities, participants discover how a woman who grew up in a poor neighborhood in Philadelphia and experienced racial discrimination from a young age grew up to be one of the greatest voices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Participants also learn how Anderson fought racism in her own quiet way, bringing questions of inequality to the forefront of America's mind and sparking controversy nationwide. Learn more about this module and see a short video about its launch event at Lincoln Middle School at <http://www.cwhf.org/educational-resources/diy-history/marian>.

A third DIY History module, *STEMfems: Women Transforming Our World*, was previewed in September 2014 and officially launched in September 2015. Understanding that women still only make up 25 percent of the STEM workforce in the U.S. and that exposure to women working in STEM fields encourages young women to pursue STEM careers, the module is designed to address this critical gap by providing positive role models and continues our commitment to highlighting pioneering Connecticut women in STEM through the stories of Inductees including Dr. Joan Steitz (distinguished professor of molecular biophysics at Yale University), Dr. Barbara McClintock (Nobel-prize winning genetics pioneer), Theodate Pope Riddle (one of the first female architects in the U.S.), Dr. Dorrit Hoffleit (world-renowned astronomer) and 2014 Inductee Jennifer Lawton (pioneer in 3D printing). The module will also educate and empower young women to see the breadth of possibilities available to them in STEM fields as they develop confidence in their own ability to pursue STEM careers. Learn more about this module at <http://www.cwhf.org/STEM>.