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Students participating in the 2012 Pinellas County History Fair at USF St. Petersburg.

Hundreds of students from across Pinellas County will converge on USF St. Petersburg Saturday for the 16th Annual Pinellas County History Day.

This is the fifth year in a row the event has been held at USF St. Petersburg, which co-sponsors the event with Pinellas County Schools.

USFSP professors and graduate students serve as judges, including College of Education Dean Bill Heller, Ph.D.; Visiting Assistant History Professor David McMullen, Ph.D.; Associate Journalism Professor Robert Dardenne, Ph.D; Daun Fletcher, Florida Studies program assistant; and Florida Studies graduate student Karen Rhodes.

Elementary, middle and high school students display their class projects, papers and multi-media presentations in five categories: exhibits, performances, documentaries, research papers and websites.

Heller said the event always renews his faith in public education. “As an educator it really elevates my feeling about how well things are going in the schools,” he said. “There is so much talent and capability in the schools. The general public doesn’t get a sense of what these kids are learning. I just wish these presentations could be televised so the general public can see what these kids are learning.”

It also shows off USF St. Petersburg to hundreds of potential students and their parents, he said. “We can be real ambassadors for the university,” he added.

About 3,000 students participate each year in school-level fairs, and the 600 top performers advance to the countywide event at USFSP. From there, winners advance to the state history fair in Tallahassee. Top winners from the state are then sent to the National History Day competition in Maryland. The theme for 2013 is “Turning Points in History: People, Ideas, Events.

“Seeing kids running around with shirts that say ‘history geek’ really excites history professors,” said McMullen, the faculty coordinator for the event.

McMullen will present the Florida Studies Prize for the best project dealing with Florida history and the David Carr Prize for the project demonstrating the best research. The late David Carr was a longtime member of the USFSP history faculty who was responsible for bringing the history event to the campus.



David Carr

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