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**Contact:** Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420  
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

## **Fairfax History Teacher Earns Preserve America Award *West Springfield High Instructor Honored***

Fairfax County educator James Percoco today was named Virginia's 2010 *Preserve America* History Teacher of the Year. Percoco is a Virginia and United States History teacher at West Springfield High School in Fairfax. Betsy Barton, history/social science specialist of the Virginia Department of Education and Preserve America state coordinator, presented the award during a reception at the school.

A high school teacher for 30 years and adjunct professor at American University since 2004, Percoco is known for incorporating hands-on learning opportunities into the study of history and having notable guest speakers in the classroom. Field trips include annual excursions to Gettysburg National Battlefield, the Lincoln Cottage and Mount Vernon as well as an assortment of different locations selected each year.

Using a series of "individualized field trips," Percoco seeks to expand his students' cultural literacy, make history palpable and foster a lifelong love of discovery and make learning about history dynamic, real and meaningful. Since 1991 when he developed and began teaching an applied history course, his students have contributed 30,000 internship/volunteer hours at a variety of historical sites through the Washington, D.C., area.

His work has been recognized through numerous awards and honors from organizations including the National Teacher's Hall of Fame, the U.S. State Department, Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens, USA Today, Walt Disney Company, Sons of the American Revolution, the American Historical Association and the Virginia Historical Society.

Percoco's passion for history goes beyond the classroom. He is the author of three books and scores of magazine and journal articles and serves on the advisory board for the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

"Jim Percoco has found a way to incorporate history instruction with appreciation for historic preservation in his students' historic backyard," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright. "He has demonstrated real world learning by using history to inspire and instill life skills in his students."

Percoco is the seventh Virginia teacher to be honored with this award. He will receive a \$1,000 honorarium and a plaque for his achievement and is the commonwealth's nominee for the National Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award to be announced later this year. In addition, the West Springfield High School library will receive a collection of history books and reference materials.

Preserve America's history teacher award annually recognizes a teacher in each state who demonstrates a commitment to teaching American history. The award is co-sponsored by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, founded in 1994 and offers scholarly seminars for K-12 teachers and National Park Service interpreters; Preserve America, a federal initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy cultural and natural heritage; and the History Channel.

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