

Battle Ground High School teacher will embark on trip to Poland in July

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Amanda Fulfer, a world history teacher at Battle Ground High School, will join other educators on a trip to Poland in July, which is organized by the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle.

Her group will visit sites like Auschwitz Birkenau, the Warsaw Ghetto, and Oskar Schindler's factory.

Fulfer is enthusiastic about the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. She has traveled abroad in the past, but has never been to Poland. She aims to absorb what she learns and bring back her knowledge to her students.

"It is a blessing," said Fulfer. "You don't normally get an opportunity like this to land in your lap. I've had it happen once before, and it was life-changing, and so I know that this was meant to be. I need to grasp the opportunity."

Fulfer traveled to Vietnam and stayed there for a semester in 1994, after her cousin died during the Vietnam War.

"It was something my family never talked about and I became passionate about learning more," she said. "It literally fell in my lap in college and it all worked out."

Fulfer said the trip to Vietnam included the first group of students in the United States to travel to the country after the war, since former President Bill Clinton had not normalized relations at the time. The team was technically not supposed to be there, and they used Mexican

Visas, she recalled. They started in Saigon, traveled north to Hanoi and eventually went to China.

"It was very capitalistic-feeling in the south and the further north you got, you could definitely feel the communist influence," she said.

Once she got to Hanoi, she said everyone felt they were being watched, but she noted the people in both Vietnam and China were welcoming.

"When I'm here and I jog, I carry pepper spray, but when you're in a communist country, everybody's watching you and nobody's going to do anything," Fulfer said.

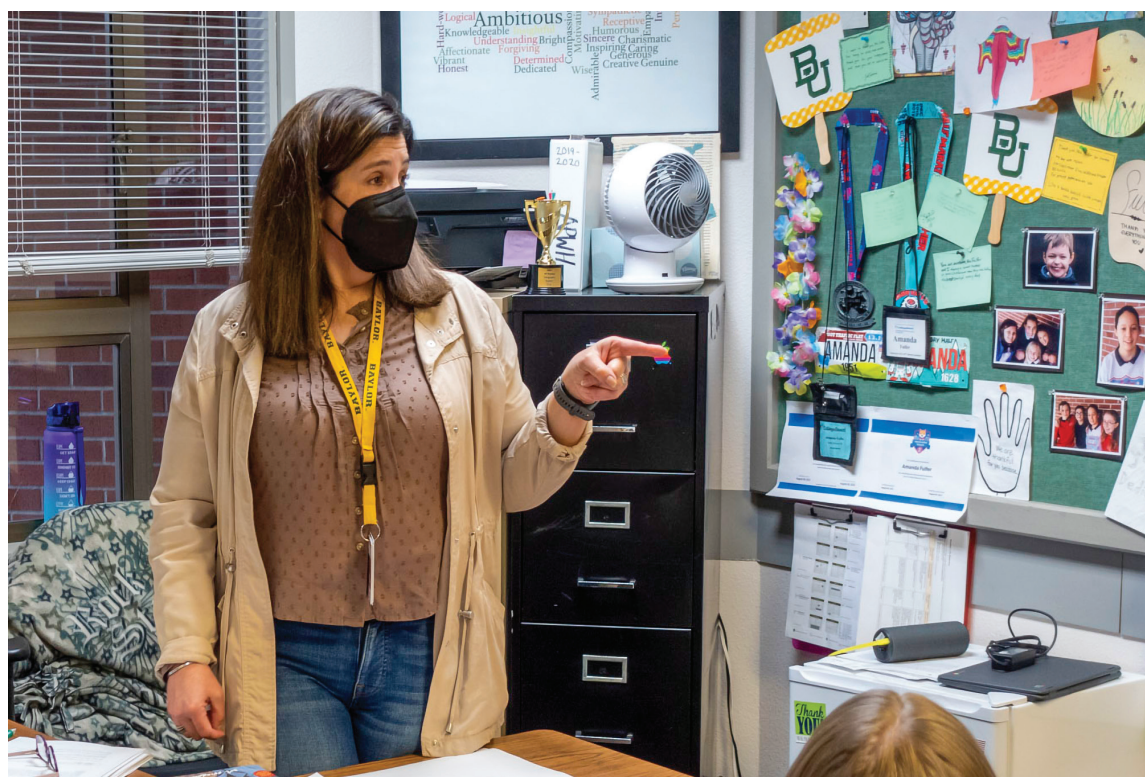
Fulfer already knows what she will share with her students once she returns from Poland.

"I really hope to be able to give my students that firsthand experience of me being there," she said. "I keep trying to prepare myself. I think it's going to be a very emotional, heavy trip."

"When I got off the plane from Saigon, you could almost feel the American soldiers who didn't get to go home. In the same sense, I have a feeling that when I step into Auschwitz, knowing that every inch of that is covered in ash somewhere in the layers of dirt, there's going to be a sense that those people are still there. There's so much to be learned and absorbed with that."

After the trip, she also hopes to bring a more personal connection to the Holocaust through her travels.

"With Holocaust education, we



Amanda Fulfer talks with students during her World History class at Battle Ground High School.

COURTESY PHOTO

have to honor that history and the sacrifice of 11 million people so that maybe one day, we can actually say 'never again' and mean it," Fulfer said. "If we don't teach this history and we don't teach it with the empathy and compassion it deserves, we're doing no justice to those people who lost their lives."

Fulfer said she struggles to understand how people can feel so much hatred toward another group

of people both historically and in the present time. In today's culture with social media, she feels it has enabled further bigotry. She noted the antisemitic attacks against synagogues and other religious places that have taken place in the country in recent years have left her "confounded."

Fulfer said around 21 people will travel with her. Half of the group is made up of educators and

not all of them are from Washington state. That will add another layer to discussions, Fulfer said, since they can talk about how the material is taught in their respective states.

Although it's strongly encouraged to teach about the Holocaust in Washington state, Fulfer said it is not required. She hopes it becomes a requirement, as is the case in Oregon, in the future.

Gina Anderson named Clerk of the Year

THE REFLECTOR

Gina Anderson, the deputy clerk-treasurer for the city of Woodland, received the Clerk of the Year award from the Washington Municipal Clerks Association (WMCA) on March 17.

Anderson has served in her position in Woodland for 26 years. She has also been the WMCA treasurer since 2011 and has volunteered on numerous committees for multiple terms.

Anderson holds the highest professional certification available to municipal clerks as a master municipal clerk.

"In addition to performing all of the normal functions of her job,



COURTESY PHOTO

Gina Anderson, left, poses with her family after being named Clerk of the Year by the Washington Municipal Clerks Association.

Gina continually pursues ongoing professional development and provides leadership and mentorship to other WMCA members," stated a news release. "Gina also volunteers in her community and serves the City of Woodland proudly."

The prestigious award recognizes an individual for outstanding service to their city, professional organizations and the community.



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