

## **United teacher goes to summer school to study Appalachia**

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By KEVIN HOWELL

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HANOVERTON- An United Local Elementary teacher learned first-hand about the Appalachian region recently, participating in a learning project for Ohio teachers.

Marybeth Malone, a fourth-grade teacher at the school, was one of 21 Ohio teachers who attended the Appalachian Portrait Project (APP) Teachers Institute co-sponsored by the Gallia-Vinton Educational Service Center and the University of Rio Grande in June.

A Massachusetts native, Malone has taught at United for four years and lived in the area since the 1980s, but said she had not learned a great deal about the history and culture of Ohio, particularly Appalachia. When she learned she would be teaching social studies this year, she said she jumped at the chance to expound on her knowledge.

"Not being originally from Ohio, I saw it as a chance to learn about the state, in particular the Appalachian region," she said.

The institute focused on landmarks-events, people, sites, buildings, heritage and culture-in southern Appalachian Ohio, across the Ohio River in the Point Pleasant area of West Virginia, and in the Ashland, Ky., area.

Already with commonalities between people, employment, commerce, geography, tourism, health services and higher education connected via bridges across the Ohio River, the landmarks in the tri-state area provide tangible examples of local and regional history and culture as snapshots into a wider lens view of Appalachia and of American history. Besides Appalachia and American history, the landmarks also have relevance to learning about states' histories, which are usually included in school curricula, according to the Gallia-Vinton Educational Service Center.

Malone said personal highlights of the tour included President Ulysses S. Grant's childhood home and school, the Underground Railroad's John Rankin House, Point Pleasant, the Ohio River flood walls adorned with murals depicting the region's famous historical moments and a large Kentucky museum and bookstore featuring authors native to the region.

According to the Gallia-Vinton Educational Service Center, the overall purpose of the institute was to increase school teachers' knowledge of the history and culture of the region and Appalachia's place in American history. By experiencing first-hand the historical landmarks and presentations by noted humanities scholars, the teachers will be able to incorporate their better understanding of the region into their students' lessons through enhanced teaching, program materials and student field trips for experiential learning.

And Malone said she already has plans to incorporate the information into her classroom curriculum this fall.

"Overall, the Appalachian Portrait Project gave me the direct first-hand experience that could not have been duplicated in the classroom," she said. "Meeting with local people, visiting historical Appalachian sites and discussing the on-going changes in the region empowered me with an enthusiasm for the region and the Appalachian people."

Malone noted that her lesson plans for the coming year include a week-long unit to research the natural resources of the region- from apples to coal- and how they are used by the residents; reading time in which she will read to her students from books about the region; and a visit from a park ranger at the Hopewell Indian Mounds near Chillicothe, Ohio.

"It was just a great opportunity to build a greater appreciation of the Appalachian culture," she said. "The region has become so stereotyped by the media that it is easy to neglect the amazing literature and art produced there."

For information about the APP Teachers Institute, contact Dr. Denise Shockley at 740-245-0593 or Deanna Tribe at [tribe.1@osu.edu](mailto:tribe.1@osu.edu).

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