



*American Legion
Haddonfield Post 38
129 Veteran's Lane
Haddonfield, NJ 08033*

From: Alisann (Sam) Romanelli, Ph.D. Commander Post 38
To: Department of New Jersey, Americanism Committee
Subject: Proposal for the Educator of the Year Award 2024/2025
Date: February 5th, 2025

Dear Representative of the Department of NJ Americanism Committee

I am writing this letter because Haddonfield NJ Post 38 is nominating Mr. Travis Thomas for the Educator of the Year Award 2024/2025.

Mr. Thomas is the 8th grade Civics and History teacher for the Haddonfield Middle School. He has instilled in his students a sense of patriotism, Americanism and the deepest appreciation for what veterans have done for this country.

For the past 15 years, Mr. Thomas has hosted Post 38 veterans and active-duty service members who visit the many classes annually to tell their stories. The day is run by students, starting with a welcome meet and greet. The Veterans then attend, and participate in a school wide assembly on the origins of Veterans Day and the importance of service to our country. After the veterans enjoy lunch with the students, they are asked to break out into smaller class settings where they spend a class period discussing their service, experiences, and advice to 7th and 8th grade students. Afterwards, the students throw a farewell party for the Veterans as their way of saying thank you for not only their service, but spending the day with them.

This Middle School program is a huge success and enclosed are on-line articles supporting this initiative. Throughout the year, when walking through the school hallways, students express their deep appreciation to the veterans. Much of this is because of Mr. Thomas' influence on his students.

One of Mr. Thomas' classroom walls is filled with many extraordinary letters written by his students describing why they celebrate Veterans Day. These letters are part of a larger unit on the importance of service in our democracy. The unit focuses on the responsibilities we have as citizens, not only to our nation, but to each other. The Veterans Day Program is the culmination

of this unit showing students living and breathing examples of service at the highest level.

Recently, Mr. Thomas was voted by his peers as 'Teacher of the Year.' This award is a strong testimonial from the school staff, demonstrating their respect for his accomplishments and contributions to the school.

In November 2024, Mr. Thomas led an initiative to host a replica of Washington's headquarters while on the battlefield. A replica of General George Washington's Revolutionary War Tent, his office and sleeping quarters were on display in Haddonfield. His 8th grade students visited the tent and 'learning' stations, and interacted with museum instructors. This was another example of helping his students better understand and appreciate our early American history.

Mr. Thomas also oversees the school Peer Leadership Program, which focuses on developing leadership skills, fostering community growth and guiding students to making positive life decisions. This program is meant to strengthen the idea of service to the community. It is continued in high school with the idea of service to the community and to the country.

As a former school educator and principal, I've observed how Mr. Thomas' efforts have helped shape the patriotic culture in this school, and how it continues into the borough high school.

Please give him the strongest consideration for this award.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Still Serving...For God and Country,

Alisann (Sam) Romanelli, Ph.D., U.S. Army, (Ret.)
Commander, American Legion Post 38, Haddonfield, NJ

Step up, BE the ONE. Call a Veteran!

Supporting Exhibits:

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| Exhibit 1 | November 15, 2024 Article from Haddonfield Sun Newspaper describing Post 38's visit to the Haddonfield Middle School. |
| Exhibit 2 | Updated article dated August 22 nd , 2021 from the Trentonian Newspaper describing Post 38's visit to the Haddonfield Middle School. |
| Exhibit 3 | Narrative page describing Mr. Thomas' Peer Leadership program. |
| Exhibit 4 | On-line article advertising the coming of Gen. Washington's Headquarters Tent in November 2024. |
| Exhibit 5 | Letter from the Assistant District Superintendent recognizing Mr. Thomas as Haddonfield Middle School Governor's Educator of the Year award. |