



THE MONTANA HISTORY
FOUNDATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 6, 2020

Contact:
Norma Ashby Smith
Award Coordinator
406-453-7078
ashby7@charter.net

**Billings Middle School Teacher Honored as
Montana History Teacher of the Year for 2020**

Abbey Kochel, a 7th grade teacher at Castle Rock Middle School in Billings, is the winner of the 31st Montana Statehood Centennial Bell Award honoring the Montana History Teacher of the Year for 2019-2020. She received her award during a ceremony at the State Capitol in Helena on Friday, November 6th.

Kochel, a Billings native, has taught social studies courses to seventh and eighth grade students for the past five years using the Montana History curriculum she helped to develop.

“The Native Americans, followed by the immigrants, give Montana its rich cultural diversity,” said Kochel. “My students learn how the fur trade, mining, ranching and homesteading all impacted the history of Montana. These lessons allow me to teach with a passion about the state of Montana, its history, and the people that make this state uniquely unforgettable.”

Kochel was nominated for Montana History Teacher of the Year by Kathi Hoyt, a media specialist at Castle Rock Middle School, and by 7th grade student Samuel Ross.

“Before coming to Mrs. Kochel’s class, I only knew Montana was a state and Helena was the capital,” said Ross. “Now because of Mrs. Kochel, I could probably teach a whole lesson about the history of Montana.”

In her nomination, Hoyt expands upon the impact of Kochel’s teaching, not only on her students but also her fellow educators.

“Abbey’s passion comes through in how she prepares her lessons, how she utilizes her resources and makes everything about Montana history come alive for her students,” said Hoyt. “She is also the lifeline for teachers working with the Montana history curriculum for the first time.”

-continues-





THE MONTANA HISTORY FOUNDATION

In being honored as Montana History Teacher of the Year, Kochel will receive \$4,000 from the award sponsors: the Montana Television Network, the [Montana History Foundation](#), and the Sons & Daughters of Montana Pioneers. The money can be used on class materials, field trips, guest speakers and anything else that will enhance her teaching of Montana history. She will receive an additional cash prize donation from Helena's [1889 Coffeehouse](#) based on money raised from the sale of smoothies in the month of October.

For further information on the Centennial Bell Award, contact Award Coordinator Norma Ashby Smith at 406-453-7078 or ashby7@charter.net.

#####

Additional biography on Abbey Kochel

Abbey Kochel, a Billings native, graduated from Billings Senior High School in 2000. She earned an Associate of Arts degree at Dawson Community College in Glendive, MT and completed her undergraduate degree in elementary education at Valley City State University in Valley City, ND. While teaching, she also went on to earn a Master's Degree in Curriculum Instruction & Assessment from Walden University in Minneapolis, MN.

Kochel is married and has two daughters. During her free time, she enjoys playing slow pitch softball and camping with her family and friends.

