



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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York Teacher Seeks to Honor School's Fallen Veterans

– Plans for a permanent memorial outside York are in the works –

Elmhurst, IL – Something in the York High School's Auditorium lobby never sat right with Social Studies Teacher Justin Riskus. There sits a small marble plaque donated by the Class of 1985 that honors 101 alumni who gave up their lives in military conflicts. Who were these soldiers? What was their story? A ravenous investigator of history, Justin began researching the individual names of the fallen, their backstories, and the stories of their passings.

He has been working on the project for 10 years, enlisting the help of students in his Military History Club. Students start with a date of death, research census records for a tie to Elmhurst, and look at enlistment records from the Library of Congress to piece together the stories of these fallen veterans.

"I tell my students, it's easy to forget the kinds of sacrifices that people and families have to make in times of war," said Riskus. "Time moves on and they get lost to history, so trying to preserve these stories, it's important."

This passion to uncover these stories has resulted in a new display case on the third floor in York's Social Studies Department where the photos and brief biographies of a sampling of York's deceased veterans are now displayed. Riskus hopes that students and staff will pass by and learn more about York graduates who died in service to their country, many of them who were not much older than current York students are now.

The display case is the first step in a process Riskus hopes will end with a permanent monument outside York. He hopes to start fundraising for a monument in the spring. The completed monument would also include a database and website that will feature the stories and facts Riskus and his students have researched.

Justin Riskus, a graduate of Purdue (BA) and UIC (MA), has been a member of York's Social Studies Department for fifteen years.

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