

When the Lesson Comes Alive: Brooks Brings History Full Circle

Warren County's Amanda Brooks turned her classroom lessons into living history when she represented Tennessee at the National Constitution Center's *Women and the Constitution* Workshop.



Amanda Brooks (first row, second from right) attends the National Constitution Center's Women and the Constitution Workshop in Philadelphia, Penn. *Photo provided.*

McMinnville, Tenn. - For Warren County educator Amanda Brooks, history isn't just something to read about, it's something to experience. That notion came full circle this fall when the 4th grade social studies teacher from Bobby Ray Memorial Elementary stepped into the very spaces she's spent years helping her students learn about.

After five years of using the National Constitution Center's classroom resources to enrich her lessons, Brooks found herself walking through Philadelphia's historic halls as one of only 20 educators nationwide, and the only teacher from Tennessee, selected to attend the Women and the Constitution Weekend Workshop.

"I've been using the National Constitution Center's resources for years and know firsthand how valuable they are," said Brooks. "Studying the Constitution through the lens of women's history and then bringing that knowledge back to my students felt like the perfect fit for my teaching."

Hosted for a full weekend in September, the Women and the Constitution workshop brought teachers together from across the country to explore women's constitutional history and the ongoing fight for equality. Funded by the National Constitution Center, the weekend included lectures by leading scholars, guided tours, and collaborative discussions designed to deepen teachers' understanding of constitutional topics and provide strategies for classroom instruction.

One of the most impactful sessions, Brooks shared, was led by constitutional scholar Paula Monopoli of the University of Maryland, who explored how the Nineteenth Amendment should be viewed not just as granting women the right to vote, but as a broader protection against discrimination. "Her research gave me a deeper perspective on the women's rights movement and inspired me to help my students see the Constitution not just as a document, but as an ongoing story of people fighting to be fully included in its promises," said Brooks.

The experience became even more personal during visits to historic sites like the Arch Street Meeting House, which connected directly to lessons Brooks had just taught on William Penn and the founding of Pennsylvania. "It made the lesson come alive in a powerful way," she added.

Since returning home, Brooks has already woven new content and resources into her social studies curriculum. She's scheduled Civic Stories, a virtual learning experience from the National Constitution Center, for each of her classes to help students see history as something they can participate in. "Girls can see themselves reflected in history and know their voices matter, while boys see the importance of allies in the fight for equality," she explained.

Brooks said her biggest takeaway from the workshop is that "even the smallest voices matter." She added, "Every action, every voice, and every effort contributes to shaping our country's story, and it reaffirmed my responsibility to use my voice to encourage my students to do the same."

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