http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/110112/honorSM.png**Grafton students who won Honor Flight essay contest will speak during Nov. 3 program**

Two Grafton students will be on the Stars and Stripes Honor Flights to Washington, D.C., on Saturday, Nov. 3, and both will give eulogies at Arlington National Cemetery.

Marci Klugiewicz, a sophomore at Grafton High School, and Abby Cibulka, an eighth-grader at John Long Middle School, were the winners of the first Stars and Stripes Honor Flight essay contest.

This year, the contest was open to students in the two Grafton schools, but next year it will be expanded to other schools, perhaps even statewide, Renee Riddle of the Stars and Stripes board said.

Students were asked to write an essay focusing on the military service and life of a Wisconsin World War II veteran who is buried at Arlington. They also submitted videos of themselves reading the eulogy for the soldier they chose.

Finding information about soldiers buried at Arlington was harder than students and organizers anticipated, particularly without a name.

Both girls found their soldiers through unusual circumstances.

Abby's parents Betty and Michael Cibulka were sitting with Steve LaMaster at the Grafton homecoming football game when Mrs. Cibulka mentioned the problem their daughter was having finding a soldier.

It turns out LaMaster's father William, who was in the U.S. Navy for 22 years and served in World War II, is buried at Arlington.

Abby interviewed LaMaster, who said he learned several new things about his father from his and Abby's research.

"It was quite eye-opening," LaMaster said. "I never knew he was a gunner on a plane. He didn't talk about his service very much."

William LaMaster joined the Navy when he was 17 and served aboard a battleship carrier. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross Award after his plane was shot down. He retired after 22 years of service.

LaMaster plans to fly to Washington, D.C., on his own. He will join his mother Betty, brothers and sisters at Arlington Cemetery for Abby's eulogy.

"I could have watched a video of Abby, but I didn't want to. I want to hear it for the first time at Arlington," LaMaster said.

Marci was having just as much trouble finding a soldier when she decided to call the reference desk at the Milwaukee Public Library. The librarian found a newspaper article about Robert Streckenbach of Green Bay, who was shot down over New Guinea in 1943 and whose remains were identified in 2009.

Streckenbach's sister Joyce Clark of Green Bay was quoted in the article.

Marci called Clark and interviewed her for the essay. "She was very nice and very helpful," Marci said.

Marci learned Streckenbach was in his second year at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, studying chemical research, when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

He joined the U.S. Army Air Corps and was a navigator on a B-24D Liberator when it was lost enroute to New Guinea in November 1943. When the aircraft wasn't found after one year, Streckenbach was declared dead at age 22. He had served one year and eight months.

In 2004, the remains of some soldiers were recovered in New Guinea and Streckenbach's remains were identified five years later. There is a mass grave for the 10 crew members at Arlington Cemetery.

A childhood friend of Streckenbach's who lives in Washington, D.C., plans to be at Arlington for Marci's eulogy.

Marci and her father Mark will be on the Stars and Stripes flight as guardians for a World War II veteran from Fontana.

"I decided to enter the contest to honor my grandfather (Thomas Klugiewicz), who is 91 and served in the Pacific during World War II. I figured it would mean a lot to my father to go along," Marci said.

Abby will be accompanied by Lynn Slowiak, a media specialist at John Long and adviser for the National Junior Honor Society.

Abby is a member of the society, which raised $3,600 for the Honor Flight this year and $2,600 two years ago.

Slowiak and Abby will be guardians for a female veteran who worked in a rehabilitation hospital during World War II.

Riddle expects the girls' eulogies to be a poignant addition to the day's activities.

"We think it's going to be a really powerful, emotional experience for the veterans and a meaningful opportunity for the students," Riddle said.

"Our secondary mission at Honor Flight is to make sure the stories and sacrifices of the Greatest Generation is shared with students, and we feel this essay contest is the perfect way to make that connection."

Image Information: GRAFTON STUDENTS Marci Klugiewicz (left), a sophomore at Grafton High School, and Abby Cibulka, an eighth-grader at John Long Middle School who will be accompanied by media specialist Lynn Slowiak, will give eulogies at Arlington National Cemetery as part of Honor Flight activities Saturday, Nov. 3. The students won essay contests sponsored by the Honor Flight. Photos by Sam Arendt