



April 27, 2015

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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***GOMEZ MILL HOUSE CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY  
OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAM***

***20,000 NEWBURGH ELEMENTARY CHILDREN TOUR HISTORIC SITE 1995-2015***

**New York, NY** - On Friday, May 15, 2015 at 11 am, the Gomez Mill House will receive a New York State Proclamation to mark the 20th Anniversary of its acclaimed Local History Program with the Newburgh Enlarged City School District (NECSD). The Proclamation will be presented at the historic site located at 11 Mill House Road, Marlboro, New York, 12542 by State Senator William J. Larkin, Jr. and Assemblyman Frank Skartados to Dr. Ruth K. Abrahams, Executive Director of the Gomez Foundation for Mill House and David Brown, Director of Elementary Education, NECSD. Alumni of the program are also expected to be on hand, along with current classes of children scheduled for tours that day.

The highly recognized and popular program was inaugurated in 1995. From the first few fourth grade classes to the full complement of third grade classes participating from 1999 to the present, over 1,000 children annually from mid-April-mid-June have visited the Gomez Mill House for a full tour and a hands-on papermaking experience. That is more than 20,000 children, including the 1,050 scheduled this spring.

Located on the Newburgh-Marlboro border, the Gomez Mill House is the oldest standing Jewish dwelling in North America and the oldest home on the National Register in Orange County, NY. As the cornerstone of Jewish American experience in America, Gomez Mill House, founded in 1714, tells the story of Luis Moses Gomez, entrepreneur and Colonial leader of the Early Jewish community of New York. Unique among its peers nationally, this New York State historic site was also home to four other major historic figures whose lives and work not only impacted the commerce, governance, and civic life of Newburgh and its neighboring towns, but of New York State and America. (See attached list of owners)

The Newburgh Enlarged City School District, serves approximately 11,000 students from four neighboring municipalities: the City of Newburgh, the Town of Newburgh, New Windsor, and a small portion of Cornwall. The district has a Universal Pre-K Program, six elementary schools, three K-8 schools, two middle schools, and the high school, located on two campuses in the City of Newburgh. The NECSD's mission is, "Inspiring students to become tomorrow's leaders beyond Academy Field". Academy Field is the high school football field where students receive their diplomas at graduation in June. The mission is realized in the successful transition of NECSD students to college and the workforce.

A teacher's guide and student handbook prepared by the Gomez Mill House staff offers highlights and themes of specific interest and experiential requirements of the third grade social studies curricula. An orientation DVD, also prepared by the Gomez Mill House, is shown in the classrooms before each visit. Exercises and educational games in the handbooks are integrated into classroom activities before and after the tours. NECSD school officials, cooperation of enthusiastic teachers, and the assistance of engaged parents have contributed significantly to the success of the program.

The numerous thought-provoking themes that the children are introduced to are historic and contemporary; straightforward and complex, and objective and personal to each student. They include historic preservation and conservation, architecture, the overarching themes of the Mill House history of Freedom, Tolerance and Opportunity, and the specific themes related to each of the 5 historic owners: entrepreneurism, American founding principles, American Revolutionary period history, history of Newburgh from Dutch period to the present, arts and craft history and paper making, and civil rights and suffragist movements. The tour is not modified much from the usual tour offered to adults and presumes a natural intelligence and curiosity of the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders that is always successfully met with inquisitive and penetrating questions, or delighted comments and associations drawn from critical-thinking revelations that tie into their knowledge, current curricula topics, or personal experience. Often children from the same family have participated and many of the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders return in while in high school or college for more advanced projects stimulated by their earlier experience.

The Gomez Mill House Local History Program with the Newburgh Enlarged City School District is a testament to the positive impact private-public partnerships can have on local communities, and on the children who have and continue to participate in this unique experience.

*The Gomez Foundation for Mill House is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) established to support the preservation, conservation, and public programs of the Gomez Mill House and Historic Site. It is the oldest Jewish dwelling in North America, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Located in Marlboro, New York, it is the oldest historic residence in Orange County. Admission required for entry into the Mill House. For more information, visit [www.gomez.org](http://www.gomez.org), or call the Foundation at 212-294-8329. For group site tours, call the Gomez Mill House at 845-236-3126.*

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