

Lewis and Clark professor shares her love of women's history

March 17 2017 12:37 PM



GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College History Professor Kelly Obernuefemann loves history, and she especially enjoys sharing stories from the past.

“The best part of my job is when students show enthusiasm discussing historic events after I tell them a story from history,” said Obernuefemann, of Troy, Illinois. “I honestly feel that my greatest strength is my story-telling ability, which helps students understand what people went through decades, or even centuries, ago. I welcome discussion in the

classroom, and I am proudest when I hear my students debating historical concepts and events.”

In honor of Women’s History Month, Obernuefemann recently facilitated a Diversity Council event entitled “The Past, Present and Future of Family Leave Policies in the United States,” which featured author Megan Scholar, who explored the challenges faced by working women across the country.

A champion of women’s rights and causes, Obernuefemann encourages students and community members to celebrate the varied accomplishments of women all year long.

“Not just in March, but every month, we can acknowledge the contributions of women,” she said. “We can honor all women by thanking those who have made a difference in our lives and sharing their accomplishments with others – including on social media.”

Obernuefemann believes there are many lessons to be learned from women’s history, which is full of stories of courage and sacrifice.

“Quite simply, women can and have accomplished anything that men have,” she said. “Women have been part of every historic event. Powerful warrior queens have existed since biblical times. Women have served on the front lines, have led armies, have written great speeches, and have influenced world events.”

There are several historical female heroes she admires, including Empress Matilda of the Holy Roman Empire, who was also an English princess. Matilda fought a war, leading troops so that her son Henry would rule England.

“In American history, Dolley Madison is one of my favorites,” Obernuefemann said. “She is known for saving American documents from invading British troops, but she did it all calmly and while under the threat of attack. She created the image of the First Lady, and both she and Abigail Adams were critical in their support of their husbands as politicians and founding fathers of this country. The men could not have done it without them.”

Since 2004, Obernuefemann has shared her love of history with L&C students. She is a Diversity Council member and teaches courses about American history, Western civilization and the American Civil War.

“Our history is so important to us,” she said. “It explains and informs who we are today. It is amazing how many times in the past weeks I have been explaining a historic event or political movement that mirrors current events.”

Professor Obernuefemann appreciates the supportive environment at L&C and enjoys the comradery she shares with fellow faculty members.

“What I have loved from the beginning is that we have many faculty members in my age group that have really formed a community,” she said. “I have made great friends at Lewis and Clark. We share similar interests so that we are able to great synergy across many of our classes in liberal arts. For example, I discuss some of the same readings featured in our women’s literature course.”

To learn more about diversity at L&C, visit www.lc.edu/diversity.