

recent Center for Civic Education National Competition to the attention of Members. For 12 years, the Center for Civic Education has developed and promoted its "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution" program to increase student understanding and knowledge of the Constitution and this document's impact on today's society. Over this period, the program has provided instruction to 26.5 million students, distributed more than 89,000 sets of free textbooks, and trained more than 82,000 teachers in 24,000 elementary and secondary schools across the country. In light of the tragic recent events surrounding our Nation's schools, this editorial shows the positive impact that this program is having on our Nation's students and their sense and understanding of citizenship and its responsibilities.

[From The Washington Post]

A CLASS ACTION

(By David S. Broder)

The topic was the constitutional guarantee of freedom of association, and the questions from the Kentucky college teacher, the Virginia judge and the Charleston, S.C., lawyer came thick and fast.

"Given the volatile nature of the atmosphere in Colorado following the Columbine High School tragedy, do you think the Denver City Council would have been justified in saying, 'We do not want the NRA [National Rifle Association] meeting here this weekend?'" "Could it have restricted the number of people at the meeting?" "Could it have asked for the names of those attending?"

The five Hempfield High School students from Landisville, Pa., facing them were not rattled. One by one, they made their points in quick, incisive fashion, referring twice to the controlling Supreme Court cases: Barring the convention would have been justified only if there were a real threat of retaliatory violence. Limiting its size was not sensible—"It should be all or nothing." Asking for names could not be justified by any compelling state interest.

The discussion moved to the issue of youths wearing symbols or clothing that others in school might find intimidating—and once again, the students spoke calmly and clearly about the issues that have agitated the country since the Littleton massacre.

On Sunday, the second day of the annual national competition sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, a downtown Washington hotel was the place to have your faith in the younger generation restored.

For 12 years, the center, funded by a \$5.5 million annual grant from the Department of Education and six times that much in state, local and private support, has promoted semester-long curriculum called "We the People. The Citizen and the Constitution," and trained thousands of teachers to use it in classrooms across the country.

Each class is invited to compete at the congressional district and state level, and last weekend about 1,250 students from all 50 states and the District of Columbia gathered for the national finals. The format is a simulated congressional hearing on an issue requiring application of constitutional principles. Each team has four minutes to present its prepared position and then must answer unscripted questions from a trio of contest judges for another six.

"The whole class comes to Washington," Chuck Quigley, the program director, explained. "This is not like a debate meet, where the best and brightest represent the school. Each class divides into six teams—one for each unit of the course—and each team 'testifies' once in each round. You

can't have cliques or factions. Everyone has to cooperate for the school to do well."

In a 1994 evaluation of the program, Stanford political scientist Richard Brody found it particularly successful in promoting tolerance of dissenting views and active participation in the political system. Carly Celmer, a member of the team representing Florida, said, "It teaches you that people can make mistakes, but our structure of government is really sound."

Elaine Savukas, who teaches the Pennsylvania students I watched, said her husband, the principal of Hempfield High—"a school of exactly the same size as Columbine in the same kind of suburban community"—values the course because "it shows kids there are ways to work through disagreements other than violence."

Mary Catherine Bradshaw, the teacher of the Hillsboro High School entry from Nashville, Tenn., said "Taunting is pervasive in every high school." But her class, on its own initiative, came up with a checklist of actions federal, state and local authorities might take to prevent another Littleton. And then one student said, "There is something we can do as individuals." And the class began circulating a pledge that "as part of the community . . . I will eliminate taunting from my own behavior. I will encourage others to do the same . . . and if others won't become part of the solution, I will."

They put the pledge on their Web site and now are hearing that it's been adopted at high schools all over the United States.

The competition—and the underlying course—have attracted celebrity backers. Henry Hyde has coached classes in his district; Hillary Clinton, Kenneth Starr and several Supreme Court justices met with schools in this year's competition.

Anthony Corrado, a distinguished political scientist at Colby College in Maine, has judged the contest for eight years and has helped train teachers at summer institutes on using the curriculum. He takes the time, he told me, because "the best antidote to cynicism is understanding the basic principles of our system of government and being challenged to apply them to today's problems."

This is a course most of us adults could use.

(The phone numbers of the Center for Civic Education are 818-591-9321 or 202-861-8800.)

IN HONOR OF JOHN PETER, RETIRING PRESIDENT OF KIDSPACE

**HON. TIM ROEMER**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mr. ROEMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of our nation's most visionary and dedicated public servants, Mr. John Peter, who will be retiring next month as President and CEO of KidsPeace.

As many of you know, KidsPeace is a 115-year old, not-for-profit organization which helps young people face personal crisis and prepare for life's daily challenges. When John first started working at KidsPeace in 1974, the organization provided a refuge for about 40 troubled kids in northeastern Pennsylvania.

But John had a greater vision for the organization than that. He realized that children everywhere were coming under increasing pressure from broken homes, violence, drugs and other troubling influences in society. He knew

that in order to truly help the children it was serving, KidsPeace had to find a way to get to them before trouble set in, and provide a structure to help them cope with the added burdens in their lives.

Utilizing his skills as a businessman and social worker, and inspired by his training in theology, John set out to expand the KidsPeace mission nationwide. The results have been spectacular. Under John's leadership, KidsPeace has grown from a single facility in Pennsylvania to the nation's leading organization helping kids overcome crisis.

KidsPeace now helps more than 2,000 children a day at 25 centers across the country, and serves millions more each year through public education and outreach programs. Hundreds of business leaders, doctors, entertainers, athletes and civic figures donate their time and support to the KidsPeace mission.

At a time of increasing violence and turmoil in our society, children across the country know they can turn to KidsPeace for help in facing tough situations at home, problems with friends or in school, or for guidance in becoming stronger, wiser and healthier kids.

I have had the privilege of working closely with John and the KidsPeace organization over the years through the Children's Working Group, which I founded to help give voice to America's kids. We hosted two major press conferences at which KidsPeace released the results of its national surveys of American teenagers and pre-teens.

We also joined together to unveil the latest KidsPeace initiative: a Web site for young people called TeenCentral.net. I am pleased to note that since its inception, this site has received more than a million visits by kids, and has been named one of the top Web sites in the country.

Mr. Speaker, Helen Keller once observed that optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. In my view, John Peter is the ultimate optimist. He believes that every child in America deserves a chance to reach his full potential, and that no child should be left behind. He has dedicated his life to this cause and our nation has benefited greatly from his efforts.

I congratulate John on his many accomplishments with KidsPeace and the outstanding work he has done to help children and families overcome crisis. He may be retiring from KidsPeace, but his contributions will endure for decades to come.

CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SANTA BARBARA CARRILLO COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER AND THE GRAND OPENING OF THE SENIOR INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICE

**HON. LOIS CAPPS**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Older American's Month and to bring to the attention of my colleagues the 75th Anniversary of the Carrillo Community Recreation Center of Santa Barbara, California.

The City of Santa Barbara has long placed a high priority on providing a safe place for senior citizens to engage in health education