

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

and recreations pursuits. It is due to this commitment that the Senior Information and Referral Service has been established. This project represents a strong partnership between the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department, the American Association of Retired Persons, the Area Agency on Aging and the Retired Senior Volunteer program. Now seniors in Santa Barbara will have a "seamless" referral system where their questions will be answered and their needs met.

I am also proud to tell my colleagues that this year represents the 17th Anniversary of the 90+ Club which celebrates all citizens in Santa Barbara who are 90 years of age and older. This Club has been sponsored by the City Parks and Recreation Department, the Valle Verde Retirement Community and the Southern California Gas Company. I commend these fine organizations for their contributions to seniors and our community.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to join the City of Santa Barbara and the senior citizens whom I represent on the Central Coast in celebration of Older American's Month. I wish the Carrillo Community Recreation Center many more years of success and prosperity.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to be present for rollcall vote 94 "On Agreeing to the Conference Report on the Education Flexibility Partnership Act."

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall vote 94.

#### IN HONOR OF CHILDCARE PROVIDER APPRECIATION DAY

### HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Nation's childcare providers as nationwide, childcare centers have joined together to declare Friday, May 7, 1999 to be Provider Appreciation Day.

It is estimated that of the 21 million children under the age of six in America, 13 million are in childcare, at least part time. An additional 24 million school age children are in some form of childcare outside of school time.

By calling attention to the importance of high quality child care services for all children and families, the Nation's child care providers hope to improve the quality and availability of such services.

This day of recognition has been celebrated annually, since 1996, on the Friday before Mother's Day. The idea was spearheaded by a group of volunteers from my home state of New Jersey because they saw the need for a day of recognition and appreciation for childcare providers. It takes a special person to work in this field and their contribution to the quality of family life frequently goes unnoticed.

One such place, where many special people have helped improve the lives of children and

parents in my district is "Children on the Green" in Morristown, New Jersey. Children on the Green is a special place. It is a center that provides quality, developmentally appropriate childcare and early education to families living or working in the Morristown community. At the same time, this center offers some of its slots to children from area shelters. Children from the Morris Shelter, Jersey Battered Women's Services, and the Interfaith Council for Homeless Families of Morris County are in attendance each day. This type of child care provides some stability to these children while offering their parents time to pursue opportunities that would help them to improve their living situations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to join me in honoring the dedicated child care providers at Children on the Green in Morristown, and the child care providers all over New Jersey and across our nation who each day give a little bit of themselves to help a child learn, make friends and feel safe and secure.

#### SALUTE TO WALTER D. "DEE" DALTON IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS 25 YEARS OF FEDERAL SERVICE

### HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mr. ROGERS. Mr. Speaker, we in the House of Representatives are in the midst of celebrating the 15th annual Public Service Recognition Week sponsored by the Public Employees Roundtable. This week—in ceremonies on the National Mall here in Washington and in communities all across America—we pay tribute to the inspiring work of countless public servants who give of themselves to make this Nation a better place. I am proud to recognize one such public servant today.

Mr. Walter D. "Dee" Dalton of Somerset, KY, is currently the District Manager of the Social Security Administration office in Somerset. During this 25 years of dedicated service to the agency he has earned the admiration of his coworkers and the gratitude of thousands of his neighbors for his effectiveness. His career with the Social Security Administration is an inspiration to all Americans and is a sterling example of what public service is all about. Mr. Dalton's career has been built around a single idea: that reaching out and helping one's neighbors is still a noble undertaking.

In the Pulaski, Wayne and Clinton County area, thousands of citizens can testify to the fair and efficient service they receive from Mr. Dalton and the staff of the Somerset Social Security Office. This compassion for neighbors, combined with his dedicated and effective leadership, have built a solid reputation for the office that is well known across Kentucky and the entire agency.

Born in nearby Monticello, KY, Walter D. "Dee" Dalton earned a bachelor's degree in business from Campbellsville College in Taylor County, KY. The majority of his career has been in service to the Somerset office of the Social Security Administration. More than 19,000 of the citizens I represent rely upon

Mr. Dalton and his fine staff of 14 for the timely administration of their Social Security benefits. More than 6,300 Kentuckians who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) also depend upon the hard work of the employees of the Somerset Social Security office. This fine tradition of neighbor helping neighbor is why I believe Mr. Dalton is a fine example of the Federal employee we recognize during National Public Service Recognition Week.

Countless citizens join me in saluting Walter D. "Dee" Dalton. We all share the pride of his wife, Clorenda, and their two children, 17-year-old Rachel and 9-year-old Chip. I join his family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors in saluting him for his career of public service. We thank him for his dedication, his hard work, and his commitment to make our region of Kentucky a better place to live.

#### MORTGAGE CANCELLATION RELIEF ACT OF 1999

### HON. ROBERT E. ANDREWS

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 5, 1999*

Mr. ANDREWS. Mr. Speaker, economic conditions in my district have resulted in decreased home values, and in many situations, homeowners find that the value of their home is less than their outstanding mortgage. Generally homeowners who are forced to sell their home for less than the amount of the outstanding mortgage must find additional funds to pay off the lender for the mortgage shortfall. However, in some situations, the lender might forgive the shortfall as an accommodation to the homeowner.

For example, a homeowner who has become unemployed might be forced to sell because there is no income to make the mortgage payments. If the proceeds are insufficient to pay off the mortgage, the lender might forgive the shortfall—particularly if there is no possibility of recovery from the unemployed homeowner. Although the homeowner has lost a home, as well as all equity investment, the income tax laws require that unemployed former homeowner pay taxes on the amount of the mortgage forgiven by the lender. The tax laws treat this forgiven amount as if it had been paid to the former homeowner by the lender. So, even though the former homeowner does not have money to maintain or pay off the mortgage, the tax laws require this unfortunate person to pay tax on the forgiven amount.

This outcome is patently unfair, particularly when we consider that the income tax laws allow better-situated homeowners to exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couple filing jointly) of gain on the sale of a home. It seems ironic that under current income tax laws, the only two classes of homesellers remaining in the tax system are: Taxpayers with capital gains in excess of \$250,000/\$500,000; and Taxpayers whose home values have declined below the outstanding mortgage.

The "Mortgage Cancellation Relief Act of 1999" rectifies this injustice by exempting taxpayers from including in ordinary income any mortgage amount forgiven by a lender, provided the proceeds of the home sale are insufficient to satisfy the qualified outstanding mortgage. This legislation introduces fairness in