



Center News

APRIL 2006

Educating for Citizenship Focuses on Excellence



U.S. Senator Carl Levin congratulates the Center's teacher-of-the-year recipient, Blaine Betts, Westwood High School, Ishpeming.

The lunch served to attendees at the 21st Annual Educating for Citizenship conference was good. The rest of the day was about excellence. From sessions for

teachers, elementary through high school, to recognition of the Civic Education Teacher of the Year, this year's conference focused on the best materials and strategies for preparing young people to be active and responsible citizens in our democracy.

The highlight of the day was the opportunity for conference participants to have a dialogue with U.S. Senator Carl Levin. Michigan's senior senator, Levin spoke about the need for government to live up to the ideals being taught in our classrooms. Questions from the audience covered a range of topics from the federal role in education, to the use of torture in the war on terror.

Marquette's own Blaine Betts was named the 2005 Civic Education Teacher of the Year. Betts was recognized for his excellence in civic education instruction, initiative in the development of civic education

materials and programs, leadership in promoting civic education, and effective use of community resource persons in support of civic education. Currently in his 31st year teaching, Betts is best known for his high standards for excellence and his ever cheerful personality.

Keeping the conference grounded in the realities of Michigan's changing economy, and the need for high school reform, was Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Flanagan. The more demanding requirements for high school graduation, now being finalized, were presented as essential to providing students with the knowledge and skills to compete in a global economy.

The 22nd Annual Educating for Citizenship conference will be held December 7, 2006 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing.

Michigan Teachers Learn and Share in Eastern Europe

Five Michigan teachers traveled to the Czech Republic in January for a week-long seminar, *Strengthening Democracy through Project Citizen*. Organized by the Michigan Center for Civic Education as part of the CIVITAS: International Exchange Program, the seminar gave teachers the opportunity to share experiences implementing *Project Citizen*, an internationally acclaimed civic education program, with counterparts from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Colorado and

Oklahoma.

The Michigan delegation included Ann Bird, Sturgis Middle School; Gregory Evans, Winterhalter Middle School, Detroit; Rita Lockridge, Noble Middle School, Detroit; Terri Mount, Hanover-Horton Middle School; Dave Vermeulen, Nellie B. Chisholm Middle School, Montague. Accompanying the teachers were Center Executive Director Linda Start, and Director of Programs Jim Troost.

Seminar participants learned about the challenges of democratic citizenship in a place where borders shift and regimes change, providing little opportunity for citizens to experience democracy.

CIVITAS is funded through the U.S. Department of Education, which partners civic education organizations in emerging democracies with their counterparts in the United States.

UPCOMING EVENTS

We the People Finals, Washington DC	April 28-May 2
Project Citizen Hearings, Lansing	May 11
National Mock Trial Championship, Oklahoma City	May 11-13
We the People Level I/II Showcase, Lansing	May 22
Civitas Directors Meeting, Warsaw, Poland	May 24-30
We the People Summer Institute, Holland, MI	June 19-23



Educators from Michigan, Colorado and Oklahoma visit a middle school class in Usti, Czech Republic.

Middle School Problem Solvers to Showcase in Lansing

Energy conservation, vending machines in schools, childhood obesity -- these are just a sampling of the public policy issues Michigan middle school classes have chosen to tackle as part of their involvement in *Project Citizen* this year. Participating classes in this internationally acclaimed program select a problem in their community or state, evaluate possible solutions, formulate a public policy solution, and devise an action plan for seeing the policy enacted.

On May 11, classes from Detroit to Escanaba will descend upon the Capitol in Lansing to present the proposed policies to their representatives, policy experts, and other concerned community members.

Each class will also submit a "portfolio," consisting of a four-panel display and resource binder, for judging. Awards for levels of achievement will be presented, and one portfolio will be selected to represent Michigan in the Project Citizen National Showcase this summer.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Education, *Project Citizen* is coordinated in Michigan by the Michigan Center for Civic Education. The program offers teachers free classroom sets of materials, as well as free week-long summer institutes. Contact the Center for more information.



Rita Lockridge's class from Noble School in Detroit received a rating of "Superior" at the 2005 Project Citizen

Michigan Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools



Members of the Michigan Coalition on Civic Education Youth Advisory Committee met in March to add their voices to the cause.

The Michigan Coalition on Civic Education, a voluntary partnership between education organizations, civic education pro-

viders, advocacy organizations, government agencies, legislators, school board members, student leaders, colleges and universities, and philanthropic institutions, has taken the "student leaders" portion of its description seriously, and formed a Youth Advisory Committee.

The committee, composed of young men and women ranging from 7th graders to college seniors, shared their experience, insights, and opinions on the state of civic education in Michigan. Developed and maintained by Michigan 4-H, a member of the coalition, the committee plays an important role in keeping the Michigan Campaign in touch with student needs and fresh ideas.

Meeting in Lansing on March 17, the committee reviewed the preliminary results of

the Michigan Civic Education Survey. At the close of the meeting, all of the students—some of whom had driven several hours, and others of whom had flown in from the Upper Peninsula for the event—agreed that their role in the Campaign is vital and that they intended to continue to support it as they move forward in their academic and professional lives. Plans are for representatives from the Youth Advisory Committee to attend upcoming meetings of the full Coalition.

East Kentwood Advances to We the People National Finals

Teacher Deb Snow and her students from East Kentwood High School will travel to Washington, D.C., April 29 - May 1, where they will represent Michigan in the national finals of *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* program, the highly prestigious academic competition on the Constitution.

The East Kentwood students have studied for months to prepare for their roles as experts testifying on constitutional issues

in a simulated congressional hearing.

To represent Michigan at the national finals, the class won first place at the state finals held January 6 in the hearing rooms of the Capitol in Lansing.

Also competing were classes from Coldwater (honorable mention), Comstock Park, Dryden, East Grand Rapids (second place), Howell (third place), Hudsonville (honorable mention), Marquette, Richmond, Rockford, and Tri-Unity Christian (Grand Rapids).



Students on the hot seat, responding to questions from an ad hoc committee of scholars and congressional staff.

Mock Trial Tournament Champions Crowned



Kalamazoo Central High School Mock Trial team and coaches with championship round judges: Hon. Benjamin Logan, 61st District Court (second from right); Agnes Kempker-Cloyd, Assistant U.S. Attorney (second from left); and Thomas Cranmer, President, State Bar of Michigan (Third from left).

Teacher Mikell Griffith's mock trial team from Kalamazoo Central High School took top honors in this year's Michigan High School Mock Trial Tournament, becoming the third different school in the last three years to win the championship. The competition, which provides teams statewide with a fictional fact pattern and then pits them against one another in actual courtrooms, has become more competitive than ever.

In addition to Kalamazoo, the remaining nine schools that qualified for the finals were: Andover H.S., Bloomfield Hills; Central H.S., Bay City; Clarkston H.S.; Community H.S., Ann Arbor; Forest Hills Northern H.S., Grand Rapids; Huron H.S., Ann Arbor; Lahser H.S., Bloomfield Hills; Lutheran High North, Macomb; and West-

ern H.S., Bay City. Kalamazoo defeated Clarkston in the championship round of the state finals, held March 25 at the Veteran's Memorial Courthouse in Lansing. Huron H.S. finished third and Lahser came in fourth. Kalamazoo now goes on to represent Michigan in the Mock Trial National Championship, held this May in Oklahoma City.

The Michigan High School Mock Trial Tournament would not be possible without the assistance of the many attorneys, judges and teachers who give so much of their time, or without the financial support of the Macomb County Bar Foundation, the Oakland County Bar Foundation, the State Bar of Michigan, The State Bar's Litigation Section, and Center members.

Friends in High Places

Facing the elimination of federal funding for civic education, Michigan's members of Congress rose to the challenge. Congressman Dale Kildee (D), co-authored a proposal in the House of Representatives to restore funding, which had been cut from the President's budget, and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D) did the same in the Senate. 142 members of the House of Representatives signed on to the Kildee proposal and 48 Senators agreed to co-sponsor Stabenow's.

The budget process is ongoing, but such a strong showing of support for civic education is a promising sign. Michigan members of Congress who signed on were Senator Carl Levin (D), and Representatives John Conyers (D), John Dingell (D), Vern Ehlers (R), Sander Levin (D), Thaddeus McCotter (R), Mike Rogers (R), Joe Schwarz (R), and Bart Stupak (D).



Congressman Dale Kildee (right) with coordinators Roy Sovis (middle) and Jim Troost.



(Above) Michigan's congressional district and state coordinators for the We the People program with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (center).

(Below) Congressman Vern Ehlers with coordinator Susan Laninga.



**MICHIGAN
CENTER
FOR
CIVIC
EDUCATION**

2111 Pontiac Lake Road
Waterford, MI 48328
Tel: (248) 209-2325
Fax: (248) 209-2436

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Jim Troost, *Director of Programs*
Lyn Weber, *Office Administrator*

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