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CIVIC SPIRIT

October 2023 Newsletter

Executive Director Message

We the People

The Constitution opens with “We the People”. These three simple words in the Preamble set the tone of this powerful document as much as signify the source of its power - from the people themselves, rather than a monarch or a congress of leaders. These seemingly straightforward words express the quintessence of American democracy, highlighting the vital role that citizens can play by participating in civic life and governing the nation.

“We the People” is meant to be an inclusive concept. Despite political and ideological differences when these words were written, the thrust of Constitution was to create laws and standards for one country instead of a confederation of independent states. Moreover, embedded in these words is the idea that for America to achieve its aspirations it must allow for and embrace diversity of voices, ideas, and dreams, even if they did not always harmonize with one another.

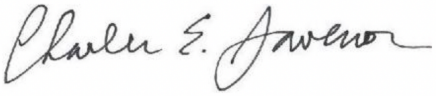
“We the People” is a phrase that also captures the essence of Civic Spirit. As a nonpartisan organization, Civic Spirit provides not only training in civic education to faith based schools, but also opportunities for teachers and students of different backgrounds to meet and work together. Dialogue across differences is an important first step leading to real change when we collaborate in an ongoing manner.

As you can see from our **Annual Report**, our **"We the Educators"** had a banner year. Attendance and participation increased greatly, and feedback from teachers was they were able to bring content and pedagogical tools to their classrooms. This year we opened these sessions to the public, and the response was tremendous. Stakeholders benefited from and appreciated Civic Spirit's approach to the contemporary topics relevant to our democracy.

Building on this success and interest, we will introduce this year called **"We the People"**. These programs designed both for educators and stakeholders will feature scholars and thought leaders exploring the themes, texts, and topics that are the pillars of civic education. You will find below information about our first two programs. We are confident that these sessions will generate conversations in classrooms, at houses of worship, and around dinner tables across the country.

Finally, "We the People" is a mindset of shared purpose that becomes a reality when we can look into each other's eyes, hear each other's stories, and identify common causes towards which we can work together. When we put these fundamental civic skills into action, the aspirational goal of "a more perfect union" feels that much closer.

Looking Forward,
Rabbi Charles E. Savenor



Rabbi Charles E. Savenor
Executive Director, Civic Spirit

If you would like to support our efforts, please consider making a gift.

Donate Today

We the Educators

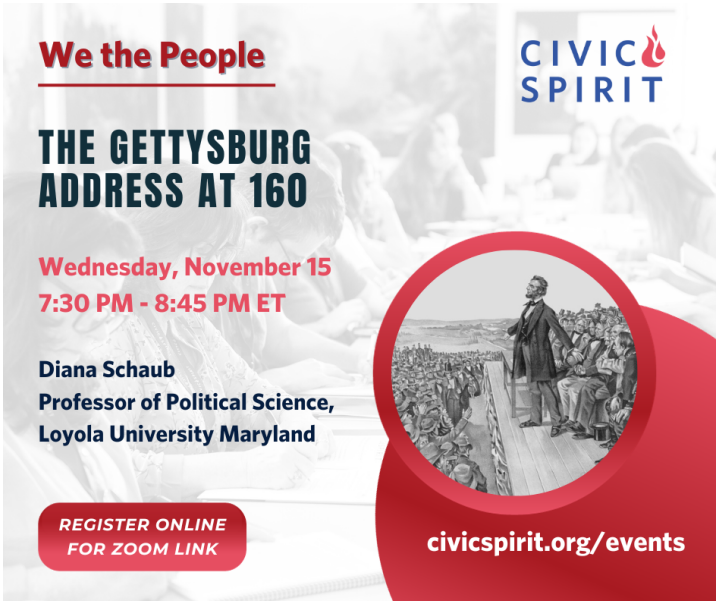
Calling all educators! Join us for the kick-off session of our **We the Educators** series to explore strategies for teaching Election 2024.

Are you ready to prepare your students for this pivotal moment replete with complexity and opportunity for elevated discussion? In the evolving political landscape, preparing our students to engage in the upcoming Election 2024 demands thoughtful approaches and enhanced pedagogical skills. Join this We the Educators workshop with Civic Spirit's Director of Education and Innovation, Audi Hecht, where we will provide specific insights and strategies for teaching Election 2024 in a non-partisan and productive manner and encourage valuable reflection.

Wednesday, November 1
7:30 PM - 8:45 PM ET
Zoom

Register Here

We the People



The Gettysburg Address is the most famous American speech. Why does it hold this canonical position in American memory? Join us for this We the People event as we mark the 160th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address. We'll engage in a close study of the 272 words of the speech, exploring what Abraham Lincoln set out to accomplish and how he achieved it with such brevity.

Wednesday, November 15
7:30 PM - 8:45 PM ET
Zoom

Register Here

Diana Schaub is Professor of Political Science at Loyola University Maryland and a non-resident Senior Scholar in the Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies department at the American Enterprise Institute. She was the Garwood Teaching Fellow at Princeton University in 2011-12 and Visiting Professor of Political Theory in the Government Department at Harvard

University in 2018, 2020, and 2022. She is the author of a book on Montesquieu, along with many scholarly articles in the fields of political philosophy and American political thought. She is a coeditor (with Amy and Leon Kass) of What So Proudly We Hail: The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song. A member of the Board of Directors of the Abraham Lincoln Institute, she also sits on the publication committee of National Affairs. Her book on Lincoln's rhetoric and statesmanship, His Greatest Speeches: How Lincoln Moved the Nation, appeared in 2021 from St. Martin's Press.

As the semiquincentennial of America's independence approaches, all of us have a chance to reflect on the creation of the United States. But in 2023, we also observe the 250th anniversary of the Boston Tea Party, a famous evening of property destruction that touched off the events that led to American Independence. Our nation has had debates in recent years about 1619, 1776, and whose stories we ought to teach. This We the People talk will explore the rich possibilities for understanding the history of the American Revolution, the broad possibilities for storytelling, and the mixed legacy of the Boston Tea Party and the Revolution in our own times.

Monday, December 11
7:30 PM - 8:45 PM ET
Zoom

Register Here

Benjamin L. Carp is the Daniel M. Lyons Professor of American History at Brooklyn College and teaches at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is the author of The Great New York Fire of 1776: A Lost Story of the American Revolution (2023). He previously wrote Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America (2010), which won the triennial Society of the Cincinnati Cox Book Prize in 2013; and Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution (2007). With Richard D. Brown, he co-edited Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791: Documents and Essays, 3rd ed. (2014). He has written about nationalism, firefighters, Benjamin Franklin, and Quaker merchants in Charleston. He has also written for Colonial Williamsburg, the New York Daily News, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post. He previously taught at the University of Edinburgh and Tufts University.

Civic Spirit Clubs

Our **Civic Spirit Clubs** have launched! These co-curricular, school-based clubs provide students with opportunities to meet regularly in-person and address local issues that are important to their community. Working with an advisor to develop learning experiences that will impact their local communities, students develop leadership skills, practice problem-solving, and build bonds as a group. They also have the chance to connect with other students across our network, and learn from civic change makers throughout the country.

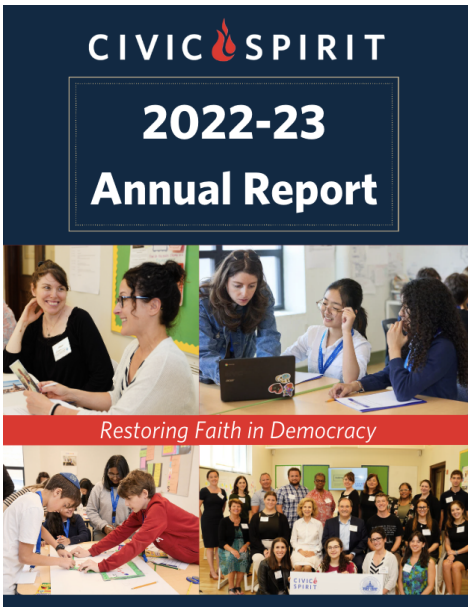
We are thrilled to announce that you can find a Civic Spirit Club in the following schools this year:

- Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School - Brooklyn, NY
- Christadelphian Heritage School - Simi Valley, CA
- Denver Jewish Day School - Denver, CO
- Dunbar High School - Washington, DC
- The Frisch School - Paramus, NJ
- The Jewish Educational Center - Elizabeth, NJ
- Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls - Teaneck, NJ
- Xaverian - Brooklyn, NY
- Yeshiva High School for Girls/Central - Hollis, NY

To learn more about Civic Spirit Clubs or if you are interested in bringing a Civic Spirit Club to your school, please contact Hillary, our Director of Student Experiences, at **hillary@civicspirit.org**

2022-23 Annual Report

Our 2022-23 Annual Report is out now! Civic Spirit is proud to present the impact and growth our signature programs have had this past year. Thanks to our wonderful community of supporters and stakeholders, our team was able to bring back initiatives such as Civic Spirit Day and piloted summer camp programming to expand outreach in our communities.



2022-23 Annual Report

We are grateful to be able to share with you our organization's accomplishments and efforts.The work Civic Spirit does to enhance civic belonging, knowledge, and responsibility would not be possible without the enthusiasm and encouragement of our generous supporters and stakeholders like you.

If you would like to support Civic Spirit and its efforts, please consider making a gift today.

Donate Today

“Hear ye, hear ye!” Announcements

Can Civics Lessons for the Young Help Mend Society? - Rabbi Charlie Savenor's letter to the editor of The New York Times advocates for incorporating civic education in Middle School and High School. Read the letter **here**.

Civinomics: Why Civic Education? - Civic Spirit’s Director of Education and Innovation, Audi Hecht, reflects on how civic

education can enhance curricular value models in Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivot. View her piece **here**.

Hispanic Heritage Month - National Hispanic Heritage Month was observed from September 15 - October 15. This year's theme, *"Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We Are All, We Are One,"* greatly resonates with our mission of fostering civic belonging in our school communities and bridging differences across our diverse network of faith based schools. To view resources you can bring to your classrooms, check out **hispanicheritagemonth.gov**.

Why is Democracy Important? - Hear from our students at this year's Civic Spirit Day tell us why democracy is important to them. View our reel on **Facebook** or **Instagram** and let us know in the comments why democracy and civics is important to you!

Congratulations to Yael Steiner! - Our Director of Programs, Yael Steiner, and her family welcomed a healthy baby boy last week. Mazel Tov to Yael and the Steiner family!

Civic Spirit Welcomes New Program Associate - Juliet Barnes has joined Civic Spirit as our Program Associate for the next 4 months, assisting with the implementation of our programs and events. Our team looks forward to working together with Juliet!

Interested in Supporting Our Work?

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