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EDUCATION

Civic-minded students help get their parents to polls

By Dennis Kelly
USA TODAY

Eleven-year-old Jeffrey Crumbley gets to play Ross Perot in the play his school is doing about the election. So what's he know about Perot?

"He's rich, and he's real big on the economy," says Crumbley, a sixth-grader at Hunt Magnet School, Macon, Ga.

Close enough, and that's important because come Tuesday, Crumbley will head to the polls in Bibb County with his parents. His folks will go to one side of the precinct to mark their ballots, while Jeffrey will head to another set of voting booths to cast his own unofficial ballot.

Students in Georgia and 10 other states are taking part in the election through the Kids Voting program, which, like a lot of other school projects this year, tries to take advantage of presidential politicking to help students learn their civics.

But this one is different because for students to participate, they have to bring their parents with them to the polls. It's all a not-so-subtle attempt to increase voter turnout. And it may be working.

Marilyn Evans, president and chief executive officer of Kids Voting USA, the Arizona-based group sponsoring the program, says that on Election Day 1990, research showed that 100,000 kids in Arizona accompanied parents to the polls and another 31,000 "dragged their parents" to the polls. That led to a 3% total increase in the state's voter turnout, she says.

"But what we are most pleased about is that we think we'll create an informed and skilled and enthusiastic future electorate," Evans says.

Indeed, the educational landscape this fall has been blooming with programs that tie into the interest in the national elections, including:

► **Mock elections.** On Thursday, several million parents and kids joined in the National Student/Parent Mock Election conducted with help from *Time* magazine, the U.S. Department of Justice and others. Earlier, about 6 million high school students took part in an election through Channel One, the school news show.

► **Theater.** Chicago-based Child's Play Touring Theatre sought children's policy ideas — including, "I would make Mr. Bush eat broccoli!" — and put them to music in *Kids for President*. The show hits Brooklyn College, New York City, today, and Belleville, Ill., Area College Tuesday.

► **School activities.** *The Boston Comic News*, a publication that reproduces the nation's best political cartoons, is now being used in Boston classrooms to help kids understand the election. Associate publisher Courtney Wayshak says the cartoons help "the MTV generation" get a quicker grasp on issues and personalities.

"My sense is there are in-



By John Bazemore, AP

THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS: Jeffrey Crumbley, left, and Paul Singleton Jr. pause at the ballot box at Hunt Magnet School.

Girls go for Hillary

Who gets the vote of girls in the nation's all-girl schools?

The National Coalition of Girls' Schools polled about 3,000 junior and senior high school girls at its campuses on the question: Which woman on the political scene has the most potential to be the first woman president? The results:

► Hillary Clinton was top vote-getter with 20%.

► Gov. Ann Richards, D-Texas, got 15%; former Rep. Geraldine Ferraro, D-N.Y., got 10%.

► As a group, current U.S. legislators and those seeking office picked up a combined 23%. Those included Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md.; Rep. Pat Schroeder, D-Colo.; and senatorial candidates Carol Moseley Braun, D-Ill.; Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer.

Others mentioned were Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Anita Hill and Sandra Day O'Connor. But some girls simply wrote "me."

Elsa Bowman, president of the girls' school coalition, says it shows that girls are identifying increasing numbers of women as role models in government.

The poll also found the girls felt that the health of the economy was the top issue in the election, ahead of abortion, the environment or foreign policy.

creasing numbers of schools tying in with world events and national events because traditionally kids tell us what goes on in the class is not relevant," says Lew Armistead, the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

The Kids Voting program, which started in suburbs of Phoenix and now reaches 1.3

million students, offers a six- to 12-hour curriculum to help schools tie into the relevance of local and national elections.

Richard Burnes, principal at Hunt Magnet School, says the Kids Voting lessons start as early as kindergarten, when students meet people like their principal to learn what a leader is. By sixth grade, students are writing about candidates and their attitudes.

"We can get parents to vote by involving their children, and in the process we're teaching children the responsibility to vote," Burnes says. "This is the age where they get the ideas that really stick with them the rest of their life."

The sixth-graders not only wrote a play about the election, they staged debates, created a cardboard display in front of the school urging parents to vote, and conducted a mock election.

Why such a big deal?

"You have to make the right choice in who you pick," says Jessica Stinson, 11. "Because you're going to have to stick with him for four years."

Adds Paul Singleton Jr., 11, "This is the future with the leaders of tomorrow."

Teacher Linda Wood says the students learn "you don't choose candidates emotionally. You don't just see the good-looking image on TV. You study the man."

Evans, head of Kids Voting, says the idea started when three Arizona couples took a fishing trip to Costa Rica and found that Latin American country had a 90% voter turnout. In 1988, only 50% of all registered Arizonans voted.

The Costa Ricans credited a program that involved children in the electoral process from an early age.

Evans says the impact in Arizona has been strong enough that candidates are showing up at schools to make pitches to students, as well as parents.

"We really have created political monsters (out of the kids)," Evans says. "And the candidates have started to respond to them."

poverty, and create a more affluent and prosperous family of nations. Every nation in the world will benefit from such a U.S. foreign policy.

With growing peace and cooperation in the international community, America's security interests have begun to shift from military concerns to securing multilateral cooperation in global economic and environmental issues. America is called to leadership in developing a foreign policy that most intelligently meets this challenge.

Election and Campaign Reform

Make Democracy Work Again

The Natural Law Party supports much needed and long overdue election and campaign reforms to make the world's greatest democracy effective once again. Our elected representatives receive major contributions from PACs and special interest groups. As a result, our representatives are more accountable to special interest groups than to voters. We need to restore accountability of government to the people by implementing the following reforms:

- **Eliminate political action committees and "soft money."** Return campaign financing to the people by preventing special interests from giving large sums of money to candidates.
- **Restrict lobbying.** Strictly limit the ability of former public servants to lobby on behalf of domestic and foreign interests. Eliminate corporate tax deductions for lobbying activities.
- **Ensure ballot access fairness.** Every political party and candidate should have the same requirements for getting on the ballot in each election.
- **Promote campaign fairness.** It is the right of the American people to hear the views of every candidate on the ballot. All candidates should have the same access to their constituencies, including a series of publicly-sponsored televised forums.
- **Make public servants accountable.** Give voters the exclusive right to raise salaries of elected officials. Require Congress to live by the same laws it passes for everyone else.



Presidential candidate Dr. John Hagelin, his wife Margaret, and Vice Presidential candidate Dr. Mike Tompkins lead the way to a bright future for America.

Government Waste

Common Sense Management

Instead of raising taxes or eliminating needed programs, the Natural Law Party sees the elimination of government waste and the establishment of common sense management procedures as a key element in its plan to lower taxes and reduce the national deficit.

A 1990 study showed that nearly 80% of the federal budget deficit could be eliminated by cutting out waste and fraud, rather than cutting essential spending or raising taxes. In 1982-83, the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, popularly known as the Grace Commission, developed 2,478 cost-saving and efficiency-enhancing recommendations, the implementation of which could save taxpayers more than \$140 billion each year. The Natural Law Party supports the recommendations of the Grace Commission and the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste.

Savings: \$140,000,000,000

A report by the Grace Commission indicates that elimination of government inefficiency, mismanagement, and fraud can produce a savings of \$140 billion; a report by the Council of Citizens Against Government Waste puts the figure at \$166 billion.

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