Since its inception, our democracy has relied on formal and informal civic participation to thrive. We have voted, formed civic associations, organized to make our voices heard, and worked together to solve local and national problems. The United States grew to maturity as active citizens galvanized our nation to live up to its stated ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all Americans through citizen movements like the Civil Rights Movement. Throughout our history, active citizens have spurred the nation on by exercising their rights and responsibilities. “Citizenship,” as Dr. Robert Putnam exhorts, “is not a spectator sport.”

Unfortunately, active citizenship is not hardwired into our DNA. Many formal civic privileges are given to students as they turn eighteen and graduate from high school. Students can suddenly participate in the political process by voting, joining civic organizations and political parties, and even running for office. However, the ability and inclination of students to use these privileges to build a better community, state, and country, is heavily influenced by the education they receive prior to the age of eighteen. It is something that must be taught and renewed with each successive generation.

Many are concerned with the trends in youth and young adult civic engagement in our democracy. Youth overall are disengaged from formal civic activity. Even informally, youth are less engaged than older Americans in many ways. Rural youth specifically, are facing greater challenges. Researchers have found that 59.7 percent of rural youth (compared to 31.9 percent of suburban and 29.5 percent of urban youth) live in “civic deserts,” that offer limited opportunity for youth engagement.

Over the past decade, a call has gone out for a renewed educational focus on preparing young people not only for college and career, but also for citizenship. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools outlines three key civic competencies young people must develop for active citizenship: civic knowledge, civic intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions. Youth in Alabama not only need increased civic knowledge, they...
also need further opportunities to apply that civic knowledge in real-world settings. In *Guidebook: Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning*, Lisa Guilfoile and Brady Delander stress the importance of active civic learning: Young people, they claim, “can only learn how to be civically engaged by being civically engaged.”

In our role at the David Mathews Center for Civic Life, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works every day to strengthen civic life in Alabama, we have the privilege of developing programming focused on engaging young people in active civic learning. At the Mathews Center, we do this by partnering with schools, communities, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, concerned citizens, and **Libraries** to increase active citizenship and community collaboration through community forums, interactive workshops, and youth civic learning opportunities.

**WHAT CAN LIBRARIES DO?**

Libraries are incredible civic assets to a democracy. Libraries provide a safe space for citizens to gather to discuss issues and become informed about multiple perspectives. They also foster learning opportunities for youth and adults and serve as community hubs. The civic potential for libraries is endless!

**Libraries can provide information on civic engagement** designed for youth. For example, the Mathews Center’s [Alabama Civic Scorecard](#) helps young people learn more about civic engagement beyond the ballot box in a fun, engaging way.

**Libraries can host forums for young people** in their community on youth-related civic issues. What issues would you like to see young people deliberate about together in your community? The Mathews Center regularly works with libraries to host and moderate forums designed specifically for youth, on issues ranging from the dropout crisis to bullying to gun violence.

**Libraries can sponsor youth civic skill-building workshops** where young people can interact with public servants, learn from citizens who are making a difference, map community assets, share their perspectives, and develop sustainable community projects and initiatives.

We have had the privilege to learn a great deal about civic engagement from the young citizens participating in our programming. We’ve learned that “age is just a number when it comes to civic engagement,” and that young people are willing to devote their creativity and time to strengthen...
their community when given opportunities to build and exercise their civic skills.

Throughout U.S. history, active citizenship has brought out our better selves and has ensured the continued survival of our “great experiment.” We would love to work with you to pass on the “great experiment” of our democracy to the next generation. Contact us to learn more about our **FREE** programming. Together, we can equip more young people to become active citizens rather than spectators or consumers of our democracy!

**HELPFUL RESOURCES**

**DAVID MATTHEWS CENTER FOR CIVIC LIFE**

- **WEBSITE:** [https://mathewscenter.org/resources/?resource=educator-resources](https://mathewscenter.org/resources/?resource=educator-resources)
- **TWITTER:** @DMCforCivicLife
- **FACEBOOK:** Facebook/mathewscenter
- **INSTAGRAM:** @dmcforciviclife

**CENTER FOR INFORMATION & RESEARCH ON CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT (CIRCLE) AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY:** [http://civicyouth.org/](http://civicyouth.org/)

**FOOTNOTES**


vi Quote from Montevallo middle-school-aged student participant in David Mathews Center programming.
This month’s project ideas teach children about the water cycle and come from Playdough to Plato and Learn with Play at Home.

**Cloud Jars**

This activity demonstrates the concept of how clouds hold water until they become too heavy and release it as rain:

01 **Gather Supplies**
- A clear glass jar filled with water
- Foamy shave cream
- A dropper and small cups of water mixed with food coloring

02 **Make it Rain**
First, squirt shaving cream on top of the water in the jar. Discuss how the shave cream will work as a cloud to hold and eventually release water. Using the dropper, have kids slowly add drops of colored water to the shave cream. Children will have fun watching the colors mix in the jar, and eventually, the color will fall below the “cloud” and blend into the clear water below the foam. Explain that the cloud got too heavy to hold the colored water, and it let it all go to fall as “rain.”

**Water Cycle Books**

- **Hop on the Water Cycle**
  Higgins, Nadia; 978-1684100774
- **I am the Rain**
  Paterson, John; 978-1584696155
- **Let’s Investigate with Nate #1: The Water Cycle**
  Ball, Nate; 978-0062357403
- **Little Cloud**
  Carle, Eric; 978-0399230349

**Water Cycle in a Bag**

This simple activity demonstrates the water cycle and its four main stages: 1) evaporation, 2) condensation, 3) precipitation, and 4) collection.

01 **Gather Supplies**
- Ziplock bag (sandwich to quart size)
- Water and blue food coloring
- Sharpie marker
- Masking tape

02 **Fill, Zip, & Observe**
Start by drawing a sun, cloud, and water on the bag to remind us that all three are needed to make the water cycle work. Put four drops of blue food coloring in 1/4 cup water and pour it into the bag and zip it up tight. Tape bag to a window that receives sunlight and watch. Over the next few days, water will evaporate and condense on the sides of the bag and roll back down to the bottom.

**Cloud in a Jar**

Here’s another “cloud in a jar” activity—this one demonstrates how clouds form:

01 **Gather Supplies**
- A clear glass jar with a lid
- Wooden matches
- Hot water
- Ice

02 **Mix Hot and Cold**
Add a few inches of hot tap water to the glass jar. Place cold ice cubes on the inside of the lid.

03 **Get Fired Up**
For clouds to form, they need a substance to aid in the condensation process. Tiny particles of dust, salt, pollution, all work to form clouds, and in the jar we will use a match. Light a match and have the kid blow it out. Drop the smoking match into the jar and place the lid on the jar (iced side up) on top of the jar. Watch as faint swirls of smoke begin to form, and within a minute or two, the jar will contain enough condensation to allow it to escape into the room.
On Feb. 14, 2018, 14 students and three faculty members died in a horrific shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. Seventeen others were also injured in the shooting.

When the Columbine High School massacre happened in 1999, it was a complete shock and national tragedy which seemed to rock America to its core. Few comprehended it and no one imagined anything like it ever happening again. Nearly 20 years later, school shootings are becoming increasingly common. Stoneman Douglas is another name on an ever growing list of school shootings, and it isn’t even the most recent entry. When a list of just one is too many, how is it that people seem to be growing numb and accustomed to hearing about these terrifying incidents when they are reported in the news?

If your community isn’t somehow directly impacted by these tragedies, it becomes just another terrible thing that happened to someone else. Prayers are offered. People shake their heads and ask, ‘What is this world coming to?’ Ultimately though, there typically isn’t a lot of action to prevent these events from taking place again.

The common rebuttal heard whenever anyone mentions the topic of gun control is, ‘Do you really think now is an appropriate time to talk about this?’ But this time, the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas stood up and answered, “Yes, it is.” They said it can’t wait, because waiting only means more and more deaths. They started the #neveragain movement, and to this day continue to campaign for stricter gun regulations.

In order to help support this movement, two survivors and siblings, David and Lauren Hogg, have written a book that gives a little of their history, their experiences during the shooting, and what has happened since. It seems there are so many issues to be concerned about and that nothing we do makes a difference. ‘Learned helplessness’ is the term they used in the book, where people give up trying because it seems like it is pointless.

This is a small book — only 165 pages long. Its list price is a scant $10 and you can find it even cheaper online. I think that is a more than affordable price for everyone to add the book to their library’s YA collection if it isn’t there already. It covers current—and unfortunately relevant—events for teenagers today. #NeverAgain reminds us that by working together and raising our voices, we can make a difference. And that by finding common ground, no matter what your political affiliation, speaking out on issues that affect us all may be the only way to change things. It is something we should all strive for.

**Recommended for:** Anyone who’s old enough to read and understand it. I think it’s just as important for adults to read it as teenagers.

**Things to watch out for:** Death and swearing.
Do you want to assist English language learners?

Do you want to offer help or suggestions to teachers and parents of English language learners (ELLs)? Do you currently offer ELL classes or opportunities at your library? Do you want to get started? A great source of information is the Colorín Colorado website: www.colorincolorado.org.

Colorín Colorado is a national multimedia project that offers a wealth of bilingual, research-based information, activities, and advice for educators and families of ELLs. Colorín Colorado is an educational service of WETA, the flagship public broadcasting station in the nation’s capital, and receives major funding from the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.

There is everything from ELL basics, school support, teaching ELL students, help for families, books and author suggestions, videos, and lots of other resources. Check out the website and see everything available. It’s well worth your time.

¡Colorín Colorado!

www.ColorinColorado.org

Don’t forget

September is Library Card Sign-Up Month!!!

Mark your calendars now
Sherry Hamilton at Courtland Public Library is very involved in her community. If it is happening in Courtland, Sherry is in the middle of it. Recently, the town hosted “A Day in the Park”. The town colors the fountain in the middle of the park bright blue to let everyone know something special is going on. Sherry’s committee was in charge of all the kids games, which took up almost a whole block. They made all of the games from scratch, simple fun games we all remember – balloon break, “fishing”, etc. However, the biggest hit of all that kept the kids coming back for more was the “Potty Toss.” You can see it up close in the top right corner.

Here’s how she did it: inside a large black garbage bag, stack two milk crates. Tuck the top of the bag down inside the crates. Set a commode lid on top and strap it through the bag and crates with cable ties. The grab some rolls of toilet paper, wrap them around with duct tape to keep them from unravelling. And you are ready to go! You decide how far away the kids throw from (Sherry did it by age) and how many they have to get down the “potty” to win the prize! Seems like never-ending fun to me!

As you can see from all the pictures, the games themselves took cardboard, paint, some household items, “Oriental Trading-type” prizes, and a few volunteers. You don’t need a lot of money to participate in community events – just your time and some good old-fashioned ingenuity!
August 6

Level Up Your Makerspace

In this edWebinar, we will explore new tools, techniques, project ideas, and best practices to engage your young makers. You'll learn how this makerspace director and educator has grown his makerspace and offerings over the years, and get tons of new ideas to take back to your makerspace. (edWeb) https://home.edweb.net/webinars/

August 7

Upholding Core Library Values: Serving Patrons Who Are Houseless

An exploration of how three different library systems are approaching service to patrons who are homeless according to current best practices. (Washington State Library) https://www.sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/firstdays/default.aspx

Geek Programming

Geeky programs can bring in patrons of all ages, backgrounds and interests to your library. They have an amazing power not only to entertain, but to educate. This webinar will cover: Geek and fandom trends; Incorporating STEM in geek programs; Passive geek programs; Geek clubs; Geeky community partnerships; Reaching special populations through geek programs; Geek program ideas for young children, kids, teens and adults; and Geek program resources. (Utah State Library) https://heritage.utah.gov/library/workshops

August 8

Using Loose Parts to Create Cultural Sustainable Environments

In this webinar, you will learn components of the guiding framework that uses loose parts to design environments that foster culturally sustainability. Learning Objectives: Define how loose parts support children’s culture, identity, traditions and history. Appraise the importance of creating culturally sustainable spaces for young children and families. Design spaces that reflects the culture, history, language and traditions of all children. Develop relationships with families and communities through mutual respect and understanding. (Early Childhood Investigations) https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/

Digital Storytelling, Pt. 3

Join us to explore free options for creating digital storytelling projects with your students. (TeachersFirst) https://www.teachersfirst.com/oik/ask/

August 9

Library and Classroom Connections: Using Games and Makerspaces

Tabletop games are excellent resources for both curricular and co-curricular learning. In this webinar presentation, Lauren Hays and Kim Lindskog will show you how to incorporate tabletop games into the library and connect the games to classroom instruction. They’ll also share creative ideas for using makerspaces to support gamification and game-based learning. (Follett) https://www.follettcommunity.com/plm/lk/fid=31

August 14

K-12 Science and Health Education Resources

This course will introduce free K-12 resources from the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Resources span a variety of subjects including biology, careers, chemistry, environmental health, forensics and medical technology, general health, genetics, health information tutorials, and HIV/AIDS. The presentation is designed as an introduction to NLM resources for K-12 professionals, public librarians, and individuals working with K-12 populations. (National Network of Libraries of Medicine) https://nlm.nih.gov/training

New Media and Preschool Services

This webinar will focus on real best practices of incorporating new media into preschool services. What are some specific apps that are age appropriate for preschoolers? How much time should be devoted to using an iPad or other tablets in a preschool storyline? What are the pros and cons of leading a digital-focused preschool storyline versus a traditional preschool storyline? How can digital resources be incorporated into preschool outreach programming? and more. (Association for Library Service to Children) http://www.ala.org/acrl/learning/live-webinars

August 15

Promoting Your Library in the Community

“Promoting Your Library in the Community” will prepare you to do just that. In this 60-minute online session, we’ll brainstorm ways to get the attention of not only our patrons, but also members of our community who may wonder just what goes on at their local libraries. (Utah State Library) https://heritage.utah.gov/library/workshops

Talking with Babies: Infant Directed Speech and the Role of Early Educators

The verbal interactions caregivers and educators have with infants and toddlers are critical factors in cognitive and language development, along with social-emotional development and relationship-building. Join this webinar presented by language and literacy expert, Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek to learn techniques and strategies to facilitate language development through responsive interactions with babies. (Early Childhood Investigations) https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/

August 16

Marketing for Rural Libraries

As a rural librarian, marketing your library and its services tends to get put on the back burner. This webinar will go over some easy marketing ideas for those who don’t think they have the time or the money to market their services. (North Dakota State Library) http://www.library.nd.gov/webinars.html

August 17

Six Essentials for Teams that Work

Learn what it takes to build your high performance team. The strongest and most effective teams tap into and activate the strengths of every team member and build an environment rich with trust and respect. This allows for open communication and cohesiveness, which enables a team to rise to its full potential and overcome any obstacle to achieve desired results. (Effectiveness Institute) https://effectivenessinstitute.com/register-for-events/

August 20

Identifying and Confronting Microaggressions in Our Libraries

This session is intended to foster a more conscious, inclusive communication style. It will help identify examples of microaggressions and how they adversely affect our relationships between ourselves, our fellow staff members, and patrons. We’ll discuss the ingrained biases that lead us to being perpetrators of microaggressions. We’ll also learn what to do to stand up for ourselves and others when we’re the victims of microaggressions. (Idaho Commission for Libraries) http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/infogto

Out-of-School Time: How to Plan STEAM Programming in Your Library

Want to engage school-age kids through exciting STEAM programming in your library but don’t know where to start? Three recipients of the Strengthening Communities Through Libraries grant are ready to share tips and tricks for partnering with others, selecting materials, outreach to build participation, measuring outcomes, and documenting success. Many Libraries struggle with STEAM programming; this webinar will give you the confidence to start tomorrow. (Association for Library Service to Children) http://www.ala.org/acrl/learning/live-webinars

Innovative Strategies for Autism in ECE – How Teletherapy Engages Children with Autism

In this powerful webinar you will learn how teletherapy directly benefits ECE students with Autism. The E-Therapy expert, Diana Parafiniuk, will discuss teletherapy, the issues young children with Autism face, and how technology/teletherapy activities help specialists enhance the communication skills of children with Autism. (Early Childhood Investigations) https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/

August 30


Do you want customized, professional graphics but lack the resources? If yes, you must attend this one-of-a-kind session. Mike Parkinson, a graphics guru and Microsoft MVP, will discuss teletherapy, the issues young children with Autism face, and how technology/teletherapy activities help specialists enhance the communication skills of children with Autism. (Early Childhood Investigations) https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presentations/