



This program is currently the only civics type program addressing the importance of voting in our K-12 school curriculum. It is one that has evolved from Supervisor of Elections Pat Hollarn's desire, as a former teacher, to include this student audience in her voter education program, in order to build and reinforce a life-long interest in the individual's participation in our democratic Republic. Without the continued intense participation of individual citizens, the concept of such representative government is eroded, and conscientious election administrators across the country recognize their obligation to stem this tide. Here is the history of our efforts in Okaloosa County since 1989:

- In that first year, Mrs. Hollarn researched materials that had been used in other parts of the country for similar school-based programs. The State of Ohio had a wonderful and substantive one, and she received permission to use it in whole or part. It was primarily directed at high schools, so her first approach was with the secondary social studies teachers. Two or three high schools in the area adopted the program, and that was a beginning. Over the next few years, all graded levels began utilizing the program and it began to broaden.
- In late 1993, Mrs. Hollarn discovered the Kids Voting USA, and its state chapter of Kids Voting Florida, and decided to join. Unfortunately it was a costly program and local funds had to be sent out of town to obtain materials and assistance. This meant most of the committee's time was spent raising funds. Nevertheless, the volunteer committee worked hard, with the cooperation of the school board and the school system, to be successful in the 1994 general election and the 1995 school tax election.
- This was not a one-man show. With the combined efforts of Carol DeBolt, in charge of Newspapers in Education at the Northwest Florida Daily News, and Dr. Mabel Jean Morrison, retired Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Hollarn came up with the **Kids Vote, Too** program in 1998 and formed the program's volunteer committee. The program originally included Santa Rosa County and later Walton County, but at this time, the program is exclusively in Okaloosa County.
- The biggest change also occurred in 1998, as the volunteer committee approached the school board and asked that it be taken on through the school system, which would insure 100% participation in all schools. As the program by now included many facets required by the Sunshine Standards, and the fact that we promised continued private funding, the school board and the superintendent approved this change.
- Mrs. Hollarn assumed responsibility for the fund-raising, while Ms. DeBolt and Dr. Morrison provided the teacher in-service. They worked tirelessly with a system-wide school coordinator in both 1998 and 2000 and the success of the program has grown beyond their expectations.
- In 2000, additional voting equipment was rented so high school and middle school students could vote on the same machines as their parents. A hugely successful high school political rally was conducted at the OWCC Arts Center. In 2002, another giant leap forward was made, by having internet voting in all the high schools, through a company in Kirkland, Washington.
- In 2004, internet voting was available on general election day for all students, K-12, culminating a six-week civics and government curriculum. Our internet vendor, ElectionTrust, aided us in voting almost 20,000 students in a single school-day. Many of the students will have been participating for ten years, and our hope is that will be the basis for life-long civic participation.
- While 2005 does not have a major election cycle, Kids Vote, Too stayed right on track. "Will U. Vote" was introduced as the official program mascot and our website [www.kidsvote-okaloosa.com](http://www.kidsvote-okaloosa.com) was unveiled at a launch party held with the help of the School District and the Northwest Florida Daily News. Plans for the 2006 Kids Vote, Too internet voting project is already underway!

All funding for Kids Vote, Too is privately-raised and deposited in the Okaloosa County Public Schools Foundation, making giving a bit easier for individuals and corporations, and all costs of the program are paid through an escrowed account in the Foundation, assuring the giving public of total accountability. Our "Patriotic Provisions" cookbook continues as the only fundraiser for this program.