

Kids Voting AZ gearing up for 2008 election - Partners with Arizona Foundation to increase civic participation in Arizona

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Contact: [Amy Koenig](#) (602)340-7357

(Phoenix, AZ) – Kids Voting Arizona and the Foundation have joined forces to begin gearing up for the 2008 presidential election. With Arizona's voter turn out ranking 40th out of the 50 states in the 2006 election, Kids Voting Arizona and the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education (Foundation) are declaring the time to begin their campaign for the next national election is now.

"The Foundation is excited to partner with Kids Voting Arizona," stated Dr. Kevin Ruegg, CEO of the Foundation. "Kids Voting Arizona not only develops future voters but increases the voter turnout at each election: The Foundation's purpose is to promote access to justice and a primary step to justice is speaking up with your vote." A study prepared by Dr. Bruce Merrill, Professor of Mass Communications at ASU, found that over 50,000 registered voters said that their child's participation in the Kids Voting program as their main reason for going to the polls on Election Day.

The nine-member KVAZ board of directors, chaired by Patrick McWhortor of the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits, is committed to continuing its strong mission to "engage young people in the activities of our democratic republic." According to Kids Voting Arizona's most recent reports, almost 700,000 children have participated in their voting curriculum. "This partnership with the Foundation is a first step in allowing Kids Voting to expand the follow-up outreach to schools. We need a cadre of committed partners if we want those kids who have learned about the importance of voting to take that next step and vote! Hopefully, they will encourage their parents to follow that example," stated McWhortor.

Kids Voting Arizona has moved their office to the Foundation location as they begin the direct unified campaign to develop a future generation of voters. The Foundation has committed to granting up to \$65,000 during 2007 to ensure that KVAZ can reach all children in Arizona with the opportunity to vote in the 2008 general election and beyond.

About Kids Voting AZ

Kids Voting Arizona is a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots-driven voter education program addressing the lack of civic education and strengthening citizen participation in the electoral process. KVAZ serves all school-age children in Arizona from kindergarten through 12th Grade. The program is unique because it combines dynamic classroom civic lessons with an authentic voting experience that replicates the adult ballot. KVAZ provides grade-specific curriculum online and in hard copy to over 25,000 teachers statewide in public, charter, private, parochial, home and special facilities schools. It all comes together when students, often with the help of their parents, cast a ballot for themselves.

KVAZ has also been linked to an increase in adult voter participation. Students learn about voter registration and encourage parents to register as well. Classroom discussions continue at home as

parents and students prepare each other to vote. The ballots cast by students have the same issues and candidates as the adult ballots. Students may vote in class, accompany their parents to the polls, cast an early mail-in ballot, or vote online. Student votes are tabulated and the results are shared with the community through media and school contacts.

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education

The Foundation provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups working toward "access to justice for all Arizonans" through law-related education and free legal services and by promoting statewide collaborative efforts.

Helpful Websites:

- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education: <http://www.azflse.org>
- Kids Voting Arizona: <http://www.kidsvotingaz.org>
- Kids Voting USA: <http://www.kidsvotingusa.org>