

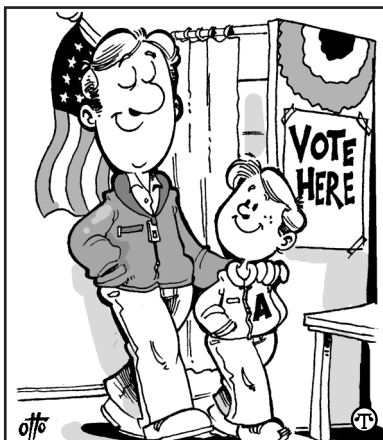
America's Leaders

Giving A Voice to the Next Generation: Teaching Kids the Importance of Voting

(NAPSA)—In the 2000 presidential election, only 37 percent of Americans made it to the polls to cast a vote. Equally as dire is the voter turnout for congressional and local elections. As presidential and local election campaigns heat up, we could all be reminded how much each voice, through voting, has an impact. There's no better time to instill the value of voting in our youngsters.

According to data from the non-profit, non-partisan educational group Kids Voting USA®, an early education on voting makes a great difference. In fact, the voting rate for registered 18-year-olds is 14 percent higher in communities that teach civic responsibility in the classroom, such as voting, than in those that do not. Now, one hotel company is stepping up, helping kids put their voice toward community service, educating children on the significance of voting in their communities. Doubletree® Hotels, with assistance from Kids Voting USA, has developed a voting-focused lesson plan and is providing tools to hundreds of elementary school students in the U.S. this year.

The voting education initiative is an extension of Teaching Kids to CARE™, a community outreach program which pairs the hotels with elementary schools and youth groups to educate children about making conscious decisions, including caring for their local community. This year, Teaching Kids to CARE students will cast their ballots in more than 100 cities to determine who, in their



communities, deserves a caring gesture—2,004 Doubletree cookies—as part of the Great Community Cookie Election.

Outside the classroom, parents can also teach children about the importance of voting. According to Chris Heller, Kids Voting USA president and chief executive officer, “Parents who talk with their kids about community service, social issues and show they care for their community by voting in elections raise children with higher levels of political knowledge and engagement.”

For those parents wanting to get involved in a voting activity with their children, following are a few tips:

1. Create a family album with newspaper and magazine clippings about an election—local or presidential—and the candidates. Consider including photographs, advertisements, bumper stickers or other election-related collateral. Sit down as a family and dis-

cuss the kind of articles (objective versus editorial), tones and issues each clipping addresses.

2. Organize a family political discussion about voting, encouraging questions. Some questions and discussion topics might include:

- a. Why do you think voting is important?

- b. Why do you think some people don't vote?

- c. What characteristics do you think a candidate should have?

- d. Which candidate do you like? Why?

- e. What are some problems in our community? How will this candidate solve these problems?

- f. What can we do as a family to help our community?

3. As a family, research how the voting process works. Look up “popular vote” and “electoral vote” to learn more about the American democratic voting process.

4. Challenge kids to take on a reporter's role, writing a brief story about community service, democracy, elections or voting.

5. Volunteer to help voting programs by distributing voter registration information to friends and family. For information on voting sites and registration, visit www.us.gov or call 1-800-FED-INFO.

Remember, even one vote can make a difference. In 2000, just five electoral votes and 540,520 popular votes—about the same as the population of Wichita, Kansas—separated the presidential candidates.

Learn more about Teaching Kids to CARE at doubletree.com/teachingkidstocare.