A Perfect Time

September is celebrated annually as Constitution Month! But did you know in September our schools also celebrate American Founders' Month and Celebrate Freedom Week (during the last week of September). I hope you have the opportunity to commemorate these special events and share your knowledge with students and the public this semester. It is the perfect time to visit classrooms and partner with teachers to expand understanding of our founding documents, governmental institutions, and constitutional design. Research and annual surveys provide evidence of the need for such involvement. This year's national Constitution Day survey addressing public knowledge of the U.S. Constitution (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2023) revealed only a basic understanding of rudimentary civic concepts, but demonstrated deficits in public understanding of key constitutional content. One in six adults were not able to name any of the branches of government and only one in 20 could name the five freedoms in the First Amendment. How can we expect a commitment to our constitutional design and principles without basic knowledge and understanding of our founding documents?

Figure 1 Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis, Retired

Justice Teaching provides materials to help attorneys and judges share your constitutional and legal knowledge and create partnerships with the education community. Justice Teaching was founded in 2006 by then Chief Justice R. Fred Lewis of the Florida Supreme Court following years of school visits and civics presentations. Now retired and teaching undergraduate students, Justice Lewis continues his commitment to K-12 education with the creation of the Justice Teaching Center for Civic Learning located on the campus of Florida Southern College. We invite you to become a Justice Teaching volunteer and work with Florida teachers to advance civic knowledge and understanding of our courts and the Constitution. We provide training and materials to support your participation with local schools.

Volunteers work with civics, government, or law classes in public, charter, and private schools throughout Florida. Florida students at the middle school level are required to take civics and are tested on a variety of content-specific benchmarks. High school students must take a semester-long American Government course as a graduation requirement. Even undergraduate college students have civic literacy requirements in Florida. Opportunities to deepen students' knowledge and help teachers as resource persons are available locally and state-wide.

Educating the public is a critical responsibility of the legal profession. We hope you will consider working with an elementary, middle, or high school to present a civics, government or law-related activity aligned with Florida state standards from our Justice Teaching

collection. Volunteers predominantly visit schools during September and October for Constitution Month celebrations and also during for Law Week activities.

We have several new Constitution month activities that are available for use now and throughout the year. Materials are aligned with new state standards in civics and government. One of our newest presentations addresses the right to trial by jury, obligations to serve on juries, and landmark jury cases. We also have presentations on steps in a trial, the Bill of Rights, What's Not in the Bill of Rights, Civics Match up and a host of materials that can be used in elementary, middle, and high school.

We encourage you to sign up on our website and select a school and grade level that you feel most comfortable working with. You can reach out to a school in your community to offer your service as a Justice Teaching volunteer or request assistance from our office in identifying a school. Training is scheduled monthly for new volunteers.

Justice Teaching Website
About - Florida Southern College in Lakeland, FL (flsouthern.edu)

Justice Teaching Partnership Registration
Partnerships - Florida Southern College in Lakeland, FL (flsouthern.edu)

Training for September 2023
Friday, September 22, 2023

Topic: Justice Teaching Training
Time: Sep 22, 2023 03:00 PM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85927245057?pwd=U0p1WmplWW8yYXZKL1Ura2Z3S2Q1Zz09

Meeting ID: 859 2724 5057
Passcode: 096776

Thank you for helping improve public understanding of our governmental processes, institutions, and constitutional design.

For additional information, contact the Justice Teaching Center at 863.680.4664 or email apitts@flsouthern.edu.