

**Star-Spangled Center Interpretive Exhibits, Educational
Programming and Assessment**

Speaker: Hedy Ehrlich, Beth Fitzgerald, Beth Hasek, Mary Ebers,
Paula Burdge

Transcription provided by:

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P.O. Box 3066

Monument, Colorado 80132

877-825-5234

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>> HEDY EHRLICH: Very few people really get to see the Oval Office. Young kids just seem to become empowered when they enter there and sit behind the President's desk. I think it really gives kids the notion that anything is possible and that they too could be President. I mean, it sounds really corny but it's true.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: There are an awful lot of families who don't get to Washington D.C. and may never visit Congress and the White House.

>> BETH HASEK: So we really wanted kids to feel like they were there in the space.

>> Our first bill is House Bill 235. So, Congressman, if you would step forward, please, and introduce your bill to the House.

>> I, Ray Field, a member of the Magic House of Representatives -

>> BETH FITZGERALD: We decided to create the Star-Spangled Center as kind of a living exhibit for children where they can come in and take on the roles of legislators, take on the role of members of our judiciary, and even know what it's like to become President.

>> We'll think about recycling these. You get to clean up your seats. They'll have a lot of trash to take out over the years and you have to pay for trash to get picked up.

>> Okay, we're passing it. And what's your reason?

>> HEDY EHRLICH: The Magic House was in the midst of a Capital Campaign and the Star-Spangled Center was part of that whole construction project.

The Museums for America grant funded the exhibits, the educational programs, and an assessment tool for the whole project.

>> All rise for Judge Summers.

>> Please be seated.

>> MARY EBERS: In order to entice a teacher to come here, it has to be something different that she can't do in her class or why would she leave her classroom.

>> We promise.

>> We promise.

>> To listen closely.

>> To listen closely.

>> To everything that's said in court.

>> To everything that's said in court.

>> HEDY EHRLICH: We never get the opportunity to kind of develop a holistic project that funds exhibits and programs and measurement tools all at the same time. So in this particular project, everything dovetailed and we were able to coordinate everything at the same time.

>> We passed it because it is good to reuse -

>> HEDY EHRLICH: The grant really made for a more cohesive project because we knew our outcomes from the beginning and were able to kind of streamline and coordinate all the components of the grant so that they all tied together.

>> What is this? Is this how you do it?

>> Okay, you may vote. This bill passes. These bills will be sent to the President.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: We started with the state standards for each grade level, creating model programming around the state standards and then developed the exhibits to meet those standards.

>> As the President, I am going to pass the Recycling Bill.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: I went to different school district websites to see what their individual curriculum called for.

>> MARY EBERS: We had to be inventive with the information that we got and say how can we make this hands-on, how can we invite kids to engage.

>> You two come up and be the plaintiff's lawyers. We need one more chair. Now the plaintiff - that word sounds like complaining to me, so they're always the ones who are complaining about something that happens, the plaintiffs. And this group, the Dollars, are defending themselves, so they're on the defense team. Now they also need some lawyers.

>> MARY EBERS: And the whole role-playing thing, it just gets them to be active members. We wanted them to really practice and participate in all these government processes.

>> And come have a seat in the jury box.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: The children's experiences at the Star-Spangled Center are designed to provide them with opportunities to really discuss, debate, and look deeply at questions that are not always so black and white.

>> So we're going to have you just turn to each other and talk briefly. Who do you think should win?

>> BETH FITZGERALD: What we're hoping in a broad sense is that they all leave here feeling more engaged and wanting to be better citizens in our democracy.

>> Okay. Now it's time to vote.

>> PAULA BURDGE: My recollection of learning civics and citizenship is reading a book, writing it down. But to actually stand up, physically be part of it, to have an opportunity to read through the information in the Declaration of Independence and get to a point where this screen pops up and says your life

could be in danger, are you still going to sign, I didn't have anybody ask me that when I was in high school.

>> MARY EBERS: We serve children kindergarten up through eighth grade. And the middle group is real easy. You know, the younger end was more of a struggle, but they have latched on great.

>> Jellybeans.

>> MARY EBERS: We have the little scavenger hunt where they make their symbols booklet and they love that.

>> HEDY EHRLICH: We definitely wanted to incorporate some of the newer technologies, touch screen. That's what kids are starting to know more and more.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: There was a huge interest from the general public in this space, so we kind of quickly had to adapt what we were doing and add in more exhibits that could appeal to families.

>> HEDY EHRLICH: We've been able to function as a center for civic engagement. We host election watch parties and mock trials for students. We've hosted town hall meetings. We've been able to invite public servants to speak to kids about the role in government. So it's been just such a pleasant surprise in the very many ways we have been able to work with the community.

>> Have a seat in the chair. Say order in the court.

>> Order in the court.

>> HEDY EHRLICH: The big picture for the Magic House was to teach kids how to be active and engaged citizens and to really experience Democratic processes before they reach adulthood so they really know what they can look forward to and how even kids can have a role in governance of some kind, whether it's on the school student council or in their communities.

>> MARY EBERS: It's been extremely successful. I don't even have to try to fill these appointments. They just call me and say they want to come. I came last year, it was great. We want to come back.

>> BETH FITZGERALD: A field trip to a museum can have a lifelong impact on children. And it can be through intellectual

growth, but it also can be through affective growth. What we're trying to do is instil a lifelong love of learning. We're hoping that children's museum is a beginning and that they will then grow to love history museums and art museums.

>> The President shall veto. So you get PE class five days a week.