



**29th Annual
National Conference
Savannah, GA**

2013 Professional Practices Program

“Students Pledge To Vote & Work The Polls”

Martin County, Florida

Submitted by:

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2012 STUDENTS “PLEDGE TO VOTE & WORK THE POLLS” CAMPAIGN

RESEARCH/SITUATION ANALYSIS: Exercising the right to vote. So many young adults text to vote for American Idol, The Voice, or America’s Got Talent; however, eligible voters 18-21 years of age neglect to vote for their government’s leaders. Additionally, Martin County poll workers are 65-80 years of age. Anticipating long lines for the Presidential General Election, the Supervisor of Elections and staff determined younger poll workers were needed to help expedite the election process. After reviewing elections data, the Martin County Supervisor of Elections office realized voter and poll worker participation was extremely low for eligible voters 18-21 years of age. In January and February of 2012, research was performed by the Elections Center and campus focus groups (Student Government, Class Sponsors, and Student Advisory Committee). Research identified the need for more high school and college students to pre-register or register to vote and work as poll workers. The focus group identified: 1) students did not realize they would be paid to work the polls; 2) if pre-registered to vote, students are able to work at the age of 16; 3) extra credit would be granted by teachers participating in the campaign; and 4.) students were hesitant to register because of being called to serve for jury duty – which does not apply to voter registration. Knowing the importance of active voter participation for the future of voting within this demographic, and having younger poll workers in our precincts a **“Students Pledge to Vote & Work The Polls”** campaign was created to educate and raise voter awareness among students in Martin County.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES: To increase voter registration awareness among Martin County’s youngest, eligible voters **four** objectives were established: **(1)** to develop a campaign for students to communicate the importance of voting; **(2)** to register a minimum of **25%** of the 2,345 eligible students; **(3)** to increase by **10%** the number of 18-21 year old voters in the 2012 election; **(4)** to create a campaign to recruit **15** new students to work as poll workers on Election Day based on **10** student workers in 2008.

IMPLEMENTATION: The first phase of the campaign was to communicate the need for increased voter education and registration in our public high schools. After presenting findings to representatives of the Martin County School District and receiving approval to conduct the campaign, the Deputy of Elections Outreach contacted each high school within the district to set up meetings at each school site. Sponsors and students received information for the **“Students Pledge to Vote & Work The Polls”** campaign. For recruitment purposes, a link was added to the Elections Center’s website displaying a “Work the Polls” video, a student poll worker application and an informational flyer. Additionally, flyers with the campaign logo and **QR code** were given to all schools.

The second phase of the campaign was to meet with student representatives from each school. During the meetings, students brainstormed creative ideas to promote the campaign on their campus. Next, they unanimously decided to have a competition between the schools to see which school would register the most voters and recruit poll workers. Each high

school held on-campus in classrooms, hallways, and cafeterias with Election's Center staff present. Each school also held a student planned and led assembly, inviting local officials to attend and participate. During the assemblies, students received voter registration and poll worker applications. After the assemblies were completed, all students who registered received a voter information guide, t-shirt, sticker, lollipop, pencils, and pocket size U.S. Constitution. Martin County Supervisor of Elections spoke at each student led assembly reminding students they are the future of democracy. The Supervisor of Elections created a video thanking all students who pledged to vote. The video was texted to over 200 students and placed on our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) site. Voter registration forms were also placed in the diploma covers of every graduating senior. Students then signed a "We Pledge to Make a Difference" banner which was displayed on school campuses throughout the 2012 Presidential Election.

EVALUATION: Communicating the importance of exercising the right to vote motivated students to register and "Pledge to Vote." Upon completion, this voter awareness campaign fulfilled all of the objectives set forth. It was concluded the voter drives and school assemblies were successful. Of the **2,345** Martin County students eligible to register to vote, **875** students registered, showing a **36%** increase in voter registration among the 18-21 year old age group. More importantly, **45** of the newly registered voters enthusiastically participated in the 2012 Presidential election as poll workers and **were paid a \$150** for the day; received extra credit from teachers; and **wrote essays** about their Election Day experience! One student was featured in a news article and shared her experience working the polls. There was a **32%** increase of 18-21 year-old voters in the 2012 Presidential election for Martin as compared to the 2008 Presidential election. A trophy presentation was televised at a Martin County School Board meeting with the Supervisor of Elections, Superintendent of Schools, students, and principals present. In conclusion, the **"Students Pledge to Vote & Work The Polls"** campaign clearly demonstrated that by increasing voter education and information, voters 18-21 years of age care about democracy and left with a new appreciation of the elections process.

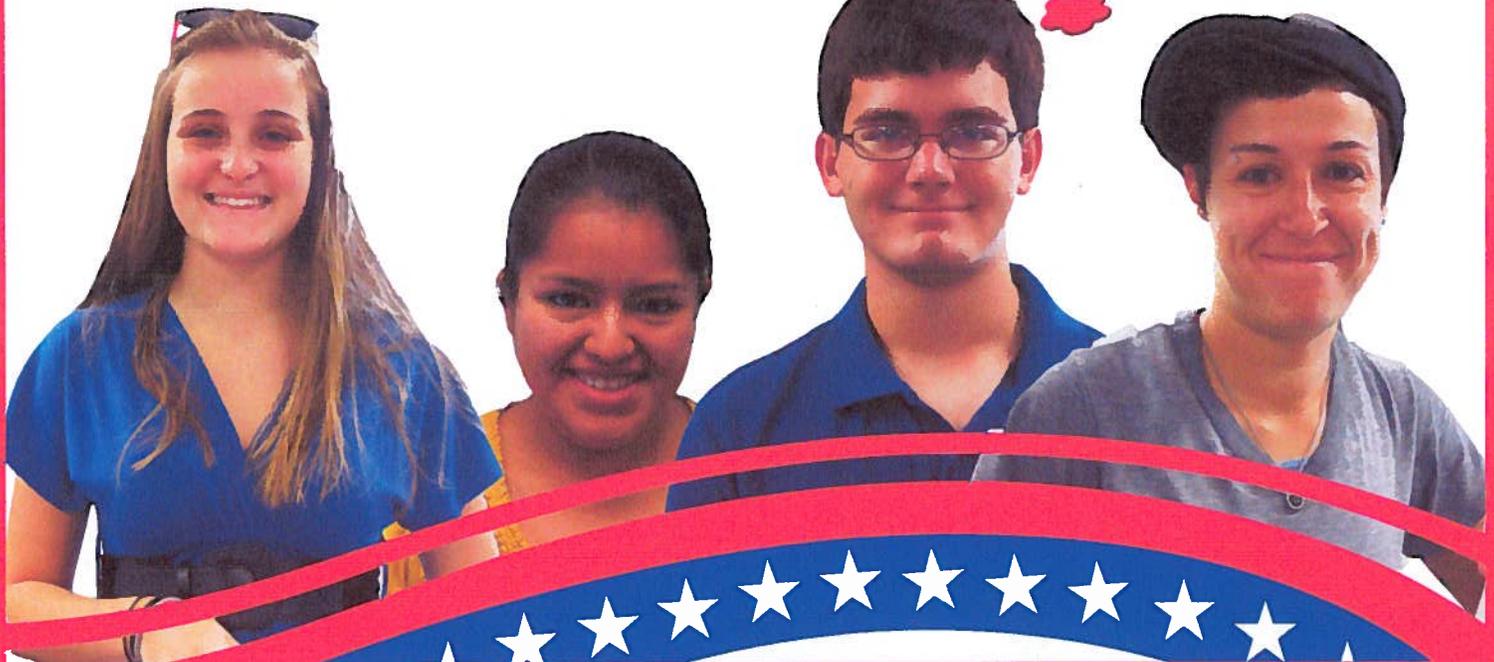
BUDGET: The proposed budget for the campaign was \$10,000. The campaign's total cost was **\$9,860.00**. The budget breakdown is as follows: T-Shirts - \$1,770; pencils - \$250; Trophies - \$250; Constitutions - \$500; banners -\$340. Work the Polls video - no cost - created in house by student interns; Student Poll Workers-\$6,750. Staff time was equivalent to one full-time employee working 40 hours a week for two months. Knowing the future of democracy will not be lost=**priceless!**

Student Work the Polls Logo
Placed on Elections Office
Web site

Banner used for Student
Registration and Recruitment
throughout the Election Cycle



Student Poll Workers
and Pre-Registered
Voters



Student Poll Workers
with the Supervisor of
Elections



Voter Registration Form and
Vote By Mail Request Placed in
All High School Student
Diploma Covers



High School Voter Registration
Award Winners with Pledge to
Vote banner signed by all
students who pledged to vote





Students Work the Polls Feedback

“I found my time at the Elections Center to be both rewarding and informational. The people I got to work with were extremely helpful and supportive. I would work with them again in a heartbeat. If anyone had the opportunity to work there, I would definitely push to do so. The work is educational and the people are a blast to be with.” Emily Luecht, college student

“Working the election poll was an opportunity that I never knew in the past was an option. I think a lot of people pass it up when they hear how long a day it is, but I’m glad I overlooked that and worked for the Martin County Elections Office this year as it was a fun and rewarding experience. Before you work the polls, you go through a 4 hour training process that is very in depth. I goes through your rights, what you should and shouldn’t do at an election poll, and pretty much how to set up, close, and work the machines. As nice as I can put, if you go into the polls after one of those training sessions and are still lost, something is wrong here.” Bronte Walsh, college student

“My experience as a worker was quite enjoyable. It has been a privilege to work with this team on these long fifteen hour days. The clerk that I have worked with is very efficient, and makes election day fun. To me, it is a privilege to work Election Day not only for the money, but also to know that I am serving my community. If asked again, I would be more than willing to work the polls for the next election.” Jenny West, High School Student

“I would absolutely recommend this experience to my family and friends though, I believe my experience was effected greatly by the professionalism and courtesy to me by Vicki Davis and her Office. I am quite sure my opinion of the Elections Center would have been different had I been working in another county.” Barbara Lowell, college student

