

# Core Democratic Values

## YAKKING ABOUT CITIZENSHIP WITH THE GOVERNOR

Governor Jennifer Granholm is passionate about good citizenship. You've read about the girls who worked for a special proclamation declaring this month Student Backpack Safety Month.

We caught up with the governor by phone to yak about Core Democratic Values.

Governor Granholm loves to see young people like the girls from Forest Hills raising their voices on issues.

"There are so many ways to have an impact," the governor says, giving examples such as the recent proclamation on backpacks. She stressed the importance of little efforts that count in big ways, including students who had a lemonade stand to raise money for people impacted by the Iraq war to kids taking time to visit a retirement home and hold the hand of a senior citizen.

"Those are all good examples of showing your citizenship."

She's not sure whether kids are volunteering any more these days than in the past, but she says it sure seems like there are many young people showing their citizenship by helping out.

"It gives me great hope that there are so many young people out there with great hearts."

The governor became interested in



AP PHOTO

Governor Granholm believes you're never too young to be a leader.

public service in high school. "My most powerful experience was being on a racial reconciliation team," she says of San Carlos High School in California, which needed healing and coming together after race riots.

This opportunity to make a difference and help heal her school had a huge impact on the governor as a girl. She also says, "My parents always

taught me I was put on this planet for something more than serving myself."

After high school, she headed to Los Angeles to study to be an actress. "It seems to have worked out OK for Arnold, but it wasn't a very good choice for me," she says with a laugh.

While working on a campaign for presidential candidate John Anderson in 1980, she realized she wanted to make a career of public service.

She enrolled at the University of California-Berkeley and earned a degree in political science. After graduating with honors, she went on to Harvard Law School, where she also graduated with honors.

The rest is history. As governor of Michigan today, she constantly speaks on civic values. She thinks our state's social studies teachers are doing a wonderful job, but she also hopes kids can get a chance to be exposed to the excitement of a democracy. Her favorite social studies teacher was Mr. Jackson. She still remembers he would sometimes stand on a table to make his point about what an amazing process we have in our democratic system.

By Janis Campbell

## Civics Institute gives a glimpse of issues and answers

What is civics? Look in the dictionary and you'll see it's the study of citizenship, especially the rights and responsibilities of people.

But it's not always meaningful to adults or kids.

To make sure kids know they can make a difference, even if they can't vote until 18, Michigan has a group of citizens and lawmakers who founded the Civics Institute.

It's a place that wants to make sure you know you have a right to be heard. But what can you do?

We yakked by phone with the head of the institute, Brian Berce, to find out.

Brian works closely with legislators from both parties on ways to make citizenship — and the Core Democratic Values you read about in class — come to life.

One of the best ways to get involved is to take an issue you're interested in and make sure your opinion is heard. That takes lots of hard work, research, and a group to support you.

The Civics Institute worked out a program with the Michigan House called the Michigan House Civics Commission. What the girls from Forest Hills did with backpacks, you can do with any issue that affects you and your classmates.

Through the Web site, you can learn what you need to do to make an issue get attention from our lawmakers. The Michigan House Civics Commission has lessons for teachers and information about getting speakers and hearings scheduled at schools throughout the state.

The Civics Institute plans a number of hearings across the state this year.

And they're not just stopping with local government. Also under way for the coming school year is an international program that will let students from several countries have an online exchange program. Eventually, Brian and the cofounder of the institute, State Representative Doug Hart of Rockford, hope the program will have a global summit where student leaders representing at least 20 countries can meet. Check out [www.civicsinstitute.org](http://www.civicsinstitute.org) and [www.civicscommission.com](http://www.civicscommission.com) to see how you can get involved.

And let the Yak know if you're successful!

By Cathy Collison

## Constitutional principles

- ★ Rule of law: Both the government and the people must obey the law.
- ★ Separation of powers: Legislative, executive and judicial powers should be exercised by different institutions in order to maintain the limitations placed upon them.
- ★ Federalism: Power is shared between two sets of governmental institutions, those of the states and those of the central or federal authorities, as stipulated by the Constitution.
- ★ Civilian control of the military: Civilian authority should control the military in order to preserve constitutional government.
- ★ Representative government: The republican form of government established under the Constitution is one in which citizens elect others to represent their interests.
- ★ Individual rights: Individuals have certain basic rights that are not created by government but which government should protect. These are the right to life, liberty, economic freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Many of these rights are in the Bill of Rights.
- ★ Freedom of religion: There shall be full freedom of conscience for people of all faiths or none. Religious liberty includes the right to freely practice any religion or no religion without government coercion or control.