

Words from the Civics Bee 2014 Pioneers

By Karen Walker, League of Women Voters Civics Bee Committee

Although not as risky as heading out during our country's westward expansion, those 57 people participating in the Needham League of Women Voters first-ever Civics Bee did so with a small leap of faith.

There were 19 teams of three participating last March and quite a supportive crowd of on-lookers. We thought it might be interesting to learn a little more about the teams and their experience in the Civics Bee.

All people interviewed stated that they entered because they thought it would be fun and, many having participated in NPS Spelling Bees, felt comfortable with the format. Their experience in the Civics Bee generally met expectations: having fun and learning something.

Dave Sherman asked the LWVN to put him on a team and was added to the "School Committee" team as a student. He stated that he had always had an interest in civics and government. "It sounded like fun. I ended up learning a couple of things I didn't know, and it *was* a really fun afternoon." Dave mentioned that one "very nice touch" was a congratulatory letter he received from our State Representative Denise Garlick.

Ethan Kahn, who is a freshman at the University of Delaware, said his team, "Yoloswagz," was formed with fellow Needham High School seniors, said that it was "a great way to simultaneously earn extra credit while studying for any upcoming exams. We thought it would be a good way to test our skills in a entertaining, laid-back environment." Ethan didn't expect to learn anything new through participating, "... but I did."

Phyllis Mays, whose team "Three Generations" included her granddaughter and son-in-law, said that her team really did study. They used two sources: [US Constitution for Dummies](#) and another book recommended on the LWVN website. Mays said that her family gained, "more enthusiasm for understanding our national history, especially the constitution, and, Jackie learned more about town government."

Mary Piltch formed a team with a friend and a friend of her daughter. The "Czech Republicans" made it to the final round. She found that it had "a nice community spirit. I did learn more about the voting process than I knew originally; all in all the support of the community and the wide range of people who participated was great."

Are there words of advice to those considering entering the 2015 Civics Bee from the 2014 Pioneers?

- Dave Sherman: “Do it, because even if you go in there and lose, it’s still a fun day – and still serves the purpose of learning about public life and maybe teaching others. “
- Phyllis Mays: “It’s a good cause; you’ll have fun and become a better informed citizen.”
- Mary Piltch: “Definitely do it. It’s a lot of fun, you learn a lot and you meet some people from town that you might not have known otherwise.”
- Ethan Kahn: “It is a great way to simultaneously earn extra credit while studying for any upcoming exams. You also would get the opportunity to meet local government officeholders.”

The 2015 Civics Bee will be co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters Needham, the Richard Patton Melick Foundation, and the Needham Public Schools on March 8th. And . . . the participants of the 2014 Bee are saying: If you are considering registering and participating in the Second Annual Civics Bee, do!

The last day to register is Wednesday, February 25. Registration is being taken online only at: lww-needham.org. If you have any questions email civics-bee@lww-needham.org.