

High School Student Organizations Promote Civic Awareness

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We are often bombarded with the idea that young people do not care about America's history, government, or politics. We read statistics like "Americans can name the seven dwarves, but not the nine supreme court justices" or only 28% of Americans can name the five freedoms listed in the first amendment. Although it is unfortunate that many Americans do not know enough about what makes the United States great and are not willing to actively work to better our country, this is not the case for many Lake Havasu High School's students.



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All Lake Havasu High School seniors take a semester of civics where they learn about the Constitution, the branches of government, politics, and Arizona government, and there are also two civic organizations to which students can belong.

The first, Close Up, is open to all juniors and seniors. Close Up is a non-partisan after school club focusing on civic-awareness. Club members have hosted election-watching parties, volunteered for the political parties, and will even work some of the election booths in February. Close Up students work during the year to fundraise for an educational trip to Washington DC where they will see the US government "close up." Students tour the Capitol, embassies, the Supreme Court, and museums. They attend a theater production at the Kennedy Center. This year students will also take part in a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns. For more information go to

www.closeup.org

The second civics club, We the People, is also an Honors level class that meets during the school day. We the People is a national competition with teams participating from each state, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. We the People students study American government by focusing on six areas: philosophy of the Constitution; the Constitutional Convention; the branches of government, federalism, and political parties; civil rights; civil liberties; and comparative government. Once students learn about the areas, they prepare for a simulated congressional hearing where they "testify" before a panel of judges. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and have opportunities to evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues. Lake Havasu High School students were judged this year at the district level by community officials including Mayor Mark Nexson. They went on to the state completion that was held on January 11th.

Students in both of these organizations display active citizenship and provide hope for a future where more Americans understand and participate in government. The Special Services Department of Lake Havasu Unified School District's mission is to identify children with disabilities and provide a free and appropriate education for them as prescribed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

(Note: We the People and Close Up are both eligible for [tax credit](#) dollars.)