

IN THE COMMUNITY: HONORING THOSE AMONG US

GRADES: 7-12 SUBJECT: Civics

- OBJECTIVES:** Students will:
- Consider the types of acts of public service (from “acts of valor” to volunteering) average citizens commit
 - Determine the relationship between such acts and civic responsibility
 - Identify community awards that recognize courageousness, efforts to improve conditions for humanity, voluntarism, and other acts of service of that nature
 - Establish an annual civic award for community members that honors an outstanding act of public service

STANDARDS:

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

• **Civics**

27: Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens’ ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities

• **National Standards for Civics and Government**

(Center for Civic Education)

V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

B. What are the rights of citizens?

C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?

E. How can citizens take part in civic life?

- MATERIALS:**
- The film American Valor
 - Television and VCR
 - Chart paper and markers and/or chalkboard and chalk
 - Computers with Internet access
 - Information on local/community awards voluntarism, civic duty, heroism, and other prizes of a similar nature
 - Newspaper accounts, photographs, lists, and other archival information (perhaps from award sponsors) of local community members who have received citations for an outstanding act of heroism, voluntarism, civic duty, public service, etc.

ESTIMATED TIME: 8-9 classroom periods (students can conduct some research outside of the classroom)

PROCEDURES: NOTE: It is assumed that students have viewed American Valor and are familiar with the Medal of Honor’s provisions.

1) Ask students to share stories of people they know (average citizens) who have committed outstanding acts of public—saving a life, risking their life to help someone else, volunteering in a nursing home, stood up for a friend, establishing a fund to help children, etc. Perhaps students can consider something they have undertaken. Encourage them to consider broad examples of such acts, from those that gain much attention to smaller endeavors of which only a few are aware. This is to demonstrate that these acts can be large or small and that, because of intent and outcomes, are equally meritorious.

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- 2) Write CIVIC DUTY on chart paper and ask students to discuss what they believe this means and involves. Facilitate student discussion and describe what they, as citizens, have the right and are expected to do. Provide a list of these rights and acts. (Refer to the Center for Civic Education's National Standards for Civics and Government for grades 5-12 <http://www.civiced.org/stds.html> for such a breakdown.)
- 3) Ask students what is expected of them in terms of civic and personal responsibility to their nation and community. Probe with them, based on their understanding of these responsibilities, why an act of public service, as identified in step 1, would be considered civic-minded. In what ways have Medal of Honor awardees fulfilled their civic responsibilities?
- 4) Ask students if they are aware of any awards given to community members who have committed an outstanding act of public service. Have them identify these awards. Divide the class into small groups to conduct additional research on the various community awards presented to individuals who have done something worthy. (To avoid overlap in findings, students might first brainstorm categories of public service for which awards are probably given.) Encourage them to contact places such as the chamber of commerce, scouting programs, universities, civic agencies, schools, libraries, etc.
- 5) Instruct each group to draw and post an annotated list of awards, providing background on who sponsors it, what it awards, and a brief history on its origins. Have each student select one award and then research award recipients over the last decade, recording the information on a timeline (who, when, for what, maybe some background on the recipient). Have each student post his or her timeline for all to review. Ask students them to note the range of acts undertaken, where there are similarities, the types of awards given and by whom.
- 6) Ask students whether based on their review of the awards and recipients, there are gaps in the awards available to deserving citizens. Are there other types of public service acts that merit recognition? Have students generate a list of things they believe should be rewarded. (The recommended Web sites may prompt ideas.)
- 7) In small groups, invite students to establish an award for one category (a different one per group) that they would present annually. They should be sure to indicate the parameters for receipt of the award. After they have shared their ideas with the class, students might consider how to make this an official community award.

ASSESSMENT: Create a rubric that evaluates student involvement in class discussion and group participation, as well as the level of creativity and imagination applied to the design of the award.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

Students can:

- Arrange a presentation by sponsoring organizations and individuals of the various awards given to community members for meritorious acts.
- Convene a panel of community members who have received a special award to share their stories and views on civic involvement and duty.
- Produce and publish a brochure that lists and describes various community awards for notable acts of valor, voluntarism, public service, civic duty, etc.
- Design a "wall of heroes" in a local public venue(library, bank) highlighting individuals—with pictures, stories, etc.— in their community who have committed an act of bravery.
- Research major international awards for acts of public service with far-reaching impact, such as the Nobel Peace Prize.

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WEB SITES: United Nations Public Service Awards
http://www.unpan.org/dpepa_psaward.asp

Highest Public Safety Award
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/pressreleases/OJP03121.htm>

A Salute to Volunteerism and Community Service
<http://www.kearneyhub.com/extras/freedom/>

Point of Lights Foundation Awards
<http://www.pointsoflight.org/awards/awards.cfm>

National Park Service/U.S. Department of the Interior: 60th Annual Honors Convocation
<http://data2.itc.nps.gov/release/Detail.cfm?ID=87>

President's Volunteer Service Award
<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.org/>

**ABOUT THE
AUTHOR:**

From classroom instructor to an executive director, Michele Israel has been an educator for nearly 20 years. She has developed and managed innovative educational initiatives, taught in nontraditional settings in the U.S. and overseas, developed curricula and educational materials, and designed and facilitated professional development for classroom and community educators. Currently operating Educational Consulting Group, Israel is involved with diverse projects, including strategic planning and product development.