

History of The Americanism Program

The Americanism Program at Gloucester Township Elementary School began in 1976 with the Bicentennial Celebration. Observance of the Bicentennial spurred interest in continuing the tradition of a patriotic assembly on a yearly basis. The original idea for the Americanism Assembly was created by former Principal Donald M. Ulrich, who established the project from 1977 until his retirement in 1991. The tradition has been maintained by three other principals & three different superintendents through the present time. The event has moved beyond school prominence to become a yearly celebration for the entire township and school district. It is now in its 32nd year.

The first true Americanism Assembly at Gloucester Township Elementary School took place in February 1977. The assembly was roughly a ½ hour and included several patriotic songs and a guest appearance from a high profile American. The program now runs about 2 hours. Student presentations make up the largest part of the show.

The school obtained a sponsor in the **New Jersey American Veterans (AMVETS)**, who provided incentives for the students to draw or write about patriotism and also gave the school a yearly gift. The New Jersey AMVETS have sponsored the program every year since the 70's. Different coordinators have included Dot Caslin, Margaret & Nelson Rummel, and now Bobbi Horowitz PSC & Past New Jersey AMVETS National First District Commander, and now programs director. Commander Horowitz has coordinated the program for the past decade and has had many national AMVETS leaders attend the assembly.

Each year a new theme is chosen. Past themes have included: *“Why We Celebrate The 4th of July...”*, *“What An American Veteran Means to Me...”*, and *“Why is it Important to Vote...”* The AMVETS will give gift cards and other awards to winning students in this year's event. The AMVETS arrange for a Senate or Assembly Proclamation and make a donation to the school library. Many invited guests, such as school officials, the Mayor, Police Chiefs, School Board members, and people from Congress, share in an AMVETS sponsored luncheon immediately following every program.

The Americanism tradition is deeply engrained into the curriculum at Gloucester Township Elementary School and closely guarded by its school community. The Americanism unit is cross content learning in its most perfect form. The unit completed by the students includes skills from reading, writing, phonics, social studies, civics, history, political science, spelling, grammar, public speaking, art, music, cooperative learning, instrumental music, and current events. Classroom teachers and special subject staff infuse New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards objectives into the month long project which culminates in the Americanism Program assembly in mid November. The November date coincides with Election Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving.

Our program has now reached true national prominence and recognition with its selection as the 2008 Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge *George Washington Honor Medal* winner and receiving the 2010 American Veterans AMVETS *Silver Helmet Americanism Award!*