



## **History of Constitution Week**

Gilbert Constitution Week started in 2002. John Lewis, then President of the Gilbert, Arizona Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, asked Bill Norton and Barb Stowell to consider a way to celebrate the Constitution within the Gilbert, Arizona Stake. The event also included a memorial to the September 11, 2001 attack, a Constitution Week Fair, a Tribute to the Founder event, and a Family Lesson.

The first event succeeded not only by educating Gilbert children about the US Constitution, but also by motivating Bill and Barb to bring this great forgotten American holiday out of the shadows.

## **America's Forgotten Holiday**

On February 29, 1952, the US Congress designated September 17 as "Citizenship Day." (36 U.S.C. 106) On August 2, 1956, Congress requested that the President of the United States proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 of each year as "Constitution Week." (36 U.S.C. 108)

With a vision to further promote the principles of the US Constitution the Committee expanded the celebration beyond the Gilbert, Arizona Stake with involvement from other patriotic groups and Gilbert-based faith organizations,

In 2003, the Constitution Week celebration added the Family Home Evening lesson and an expanded Saturday evening Fair. Distinguished characters from the Colonial Era visited approximately 40,000 students within the Town of Gilbert. 2004 brought continued expansion to the celebration by adding a Scout Night where hundreds of Gilbert Boy Scouts worked on Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge.

The Constitution Week Fair continued to grow and be the highlight of the week-long celebration. At the Fair, replicas of the White House, Capital, Supreme Court Building, Washington Monument, and Independence Hall were displayed. Further many children and youth participate through performance, activities, and other ways that promote the Constitution.

## **Over the years, the following events have taken place at the Fair.**

2003 – Congressman Jeff Flake goes back in time to visit with Benjamin Franklin

2004 – Secretary of Education, Rod Paige with a special tribute to our soldiers

2005 – Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor presided over a naturalization service for 52 legal immigrants

2006 – Benjamin Franklin celebrates his 300th Birthday and Lee Greenwood, a Nashville star, performed a live concert performing his smash single, "God Bless the USA."

2007 – Well-known action painter Michael Sreal performed artistic patriotic art work to music, dazzling and inspiring the audience, ending with a 16-foot painting of Lady Liberty.

2008 – The Lowe Family, colonial characters, and thousands of East Valley citizens celebrate the US Constitution.

2009 – Multiple stages showcase local talent, including JesterZ Improv, MC6, Davis Magic, Studio 3, MC Acappella, Light Entertainment, and Mark Cordes Comedy. This year also marks the first annual Adult Fine Art Competition.

2010 – Grammy Award-winning singer Steve Vaus helps Gilbert welcome the Constitution Fair to its new venue, Gilbert Civic Center.

Thanks to the many citizens of Gilbert and generous sponsors, Constitution Week has now become the largest celebration of the US Constitution in America. We look forward to many more years of celebrating the principles of liberty of the US Constitution.

#### **Scout Clinic**

Over 1,200 Boy Scouts work on merit badges each year. Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Citizenship in the World, and American Heritage.

#### **Student Art & Essay Contest**

The School Art and Essay is designed for students from 4th-12th grade to think about the Constitution and the importance it plays in maintaining the freedoms we all enjoy.

One of the best events of the Constitution Week Activities is viewing the art and reading the essay's of our young people. They are far more perceptive than adults sometimes think.

We encourage all students to participate in this event and ask the teachers and parents to be supportive.

#### **Adult Fine Art Competition**

Constitution Week USA is proud to sponsor the Annual Adult Fine Art Competition. Artists may submit artwork, with a patriotic theme, for display and competition at the Constitution Fair.

#### **The Making of America Seminar**

"Developing America's Great Success Formula" - This is the exciting exploration which Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, Washington and others made in order to rediscover the key to the creation of the first free nation in modern times. We'll trace their adventure from 1400 B.C. to A.D. 1787

"The Perfect Plan of Liberty" - A refreshing look at the solid political and economic principles from the preamble through the amendments to the Constitution. You'll learn perhaps for the first time, how nearly every problem in America today can be solved by restoring these successful concepts.