

Kids Voting a vital exercise for democracy

by Kathi Ballard, OPINION
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Recently I had the pleasure of speaking with two area residents who told of their memories of casting a “student ballot” in a presidential election years ago when they were in junior high school. One was an Asheville native, the other from Pennsylvania, but both recounted an experience that created a lifelong impact: casting their ballot in school for the candidate they chose. An impact that still leads them to the polls every year as informed adult voters. Their experience is the simple foundation of Kids Voting Buncombe County. The lasting impact of their youthful voting is also what motivates our volunteers. For the 11th year, Kids Voting has student voting opportunities throughout Buncombe County for the upcoming election. New this year is Kids Voting Day on Saturday, Oct. 30, when students and adults can vote together in all Buncombe County Early Voting locations between 8:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Many of the volunteers who will facilitate the balloting are area high school students who are experienced Kids Voting participants and are now sharing their enthusiasm with younger students.

Kids Voting provides online tools for educators and parents to use throughout the year that increase students' awareness of their democratic

rights and responsibilities and encourage conversations with adult voters.

Using the Kids Voting curriculum, educators across Buncombe County are encouraging student and family participation while stressing the importance of elections and civic responsibility. Many area schools are setting up polling locations in cafeterias, classrooms and media centers with a “practice” voting opportunity using the easily accessed Kids Voting online ballot. By studying democratic principles and casting educated “practice” votes every year, our students form lifelong adult voting habits that help ensure the future of our democracy.

Kids Voting encourages all adults to discuss the election, the issues, the candidates and the proposed NC constitutional amendment with the students in their lives and then vote together on Kids Voting Day, Oct. 30.

Kathi Ballard is a volunteer with Kids Voting Buncombe County, an all-volunteer nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to securing the future of democracy by educating and involving youths in the election process today. The Kids Voting program is provided in collaboration with area public and private schools, the Buncombe County Board of Elections, and more than 100 adult and student volunteers. All resources mentioned can be accessed at www.kidsvotingbc.org.