

## Stanton celebrates Constitution Day with essay contest, civic lessons

By Crystal Herrera

In honor of Constitution Day, E.M. Stanton School, 901 S. 17th St., last Tuesday launched a week of civic engagement activities with a special visit from retired 6ABC Action News anchor Jim Gardner and Judge Marjorie Rendell. The event also kicked off the Rendell Center's annual Citizenship Challenge, where students will tackle the question: "Should the Constitution be amended to eliminate the Electoral College and replace it with the national popular vote?"

Gardner and Rendell took turns reading *We Elect a President: The Story of the Electoral College* by Tara Ross to a group of fourth- and fifth-graders. Recognizing Gardner from television, students and guests spontaneously joined for a sing-along of the Action News jingle, a playful start to the morning's lessons.

"Their energy, curiosity and imagination are terrific," said Gardner. "Engaging young people about how our system works is important, especially when the Electoral College is such a complicated and controversial part of it. The fact that we can have open discussions and even disagree about these issues is one of the things that makes our country great."

The Citizenship Challenge, now in



Students take a class photo with Jim Gardner (center), Amy Goldman (left) and Judge Rendell (right).

its 10th year, provides students with a platform to express their opinions on civic matters. In previous years, Stanton students have excelled, placing third and winning \$500 one year and later claiming the top prize of \$1,000. The prize money has supported classroom technology and field trips, including a visit to the state Capitol.

"When we participated the first time, we were the only Philly public school students who made the 10 finalists," said Joan Williams, a fourth-grade teacher at Stanton. Winning first place, she said, "was so memorable for those students — it piqued their interest in debate, the voting process and how democracy works. Some even taught their

parents about the Electoral College."

This was the case for Jill Anastasis-Scott, whose two children participated in the Citizenship Challenge under Ms. Williams. She said that the challenge ignited a passion for policy and politics in her eldest son, Henry, now a first-year college student. "When he was in fourth grade, he came home and talked to us about the Fourth Amendment. Now, he's majoring in political science and philosophy."

Her younger son, now in eighth grade, also engaged in classroom conversations about democracy. "I loved how they were encouraged to think critically and consider what they might advocate for as citizens. They have such well-thought-out opinions and we tend to downplay how much children are able to have these conversations when given the opportunity."

Although the Stanton students won't be voting in the upcoming presidential election, they will cast ballots for a student body president this week. "We've been discussing elections a lot lately, both in terms of how they work in government and within our own school," said Principal Stacey Burnley. "These civic lessons help students understand their rights, responsibilities and the role they will eventually play as voters."

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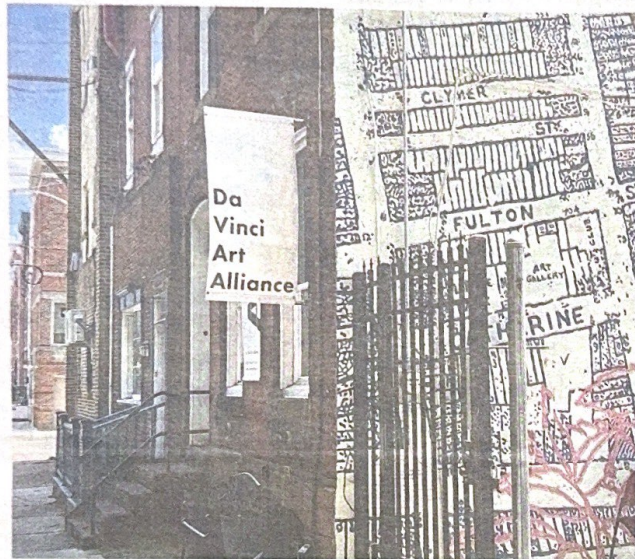
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NEWS

## New exhibition at Da Vinci Art Alliance



Lisa Hendrickson, in partnership with Broad Street Love, presents a collection of intimate portraits capturing the humanity of the “unhoused.” This exhibition, called “Unhoused & Unseen: Our Invisible Neighbors,” will be on view at the Da Vinci Art Alliance, 704 Catharine St., from Oct. 3-20. An opening reception will be held on Oct. 5 from 4-7 p.m.

Hendrickson’s work invites viewers to examine their compassion and connection to those experiencing scarcity, urging the Philadelphia community to advocate for affordable housing, reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals, substance abuse counseling, mental health support and immigration assistance. Central to the exhibition are one-on-one interviews she conducted with BSL guests, who shared their childhood memories, lived experiences and hidden talents. The bold portraits, which emphasize eye contact, closely cropped compositions and strong lighting, are

displayed alongside guests’ stories to create an intimate, moving experience. The works incorporate unconventional materials like cardboard, newsprint, paper bags and cork, revealing the beauty in ordinary, often discarded objects. The exhibition also highlights the increasing legislation targeting the unhoused by criminalizing public sleeping or camping.

Hendrickson’s community volunteer work often informs her artwork, resulting in pieces that raise awareness about the societal issues of homelessness, gun violence and gender equality. Influenced by human expression and the physical process of creation, she mixes traditional oil painting techniques with textural mixed media materials to tell her subjects’ stories.

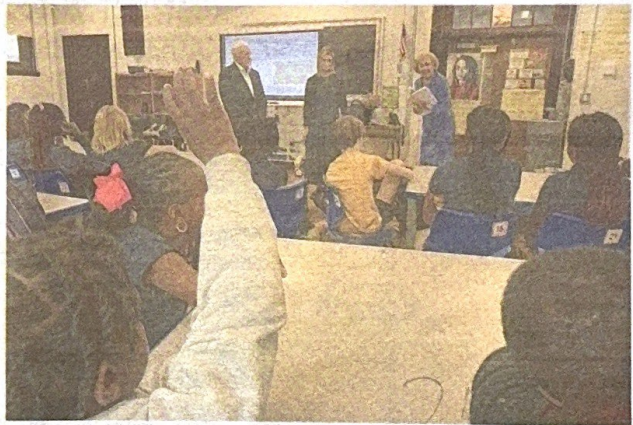
On Oct. 13, from noon to 2 p.m., families are invited to create origami hearts to pair with hat and glove donations. A closing reception and artist talk will be held Oct. 20 from noon to 2 p.m. —

## CONSTITUTION DAY

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From left: Jim Gardner; his wife Amy Goldman, president of the Radnor School Board; and Judge Rendell take questions front students in a lively discussion about the Electoral College.



Students with a question wait patiently to be called on as Judge Rendell (right) talks to students about Philadelphia’s constitutional history.

As the Rendell Center continues to celebrate Constitution Week, the hope is to inspire the next generation of voters. “These are 9 and 10-year-olds now, but they’ll be voting before we know it,” Rendell said. “What they’re learning now will serve them well in the future.”

The Citizenship Challenge, open

to fourth- and fifth-grade classes throughout the region, invites students to submit essays addressing the current issue. Finalists will present their arguments at the National Constitution Center later this year, with the chance to win cash prizes for their schools. —