

The Thomas Jefferson Citizenship Center

Restoring America's Founding Principles

*“Educate and inform the whole mass of the people...
They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”*



*“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization,
it expects what never was and never will be.”*

Mission Statement: *Project American Life rekindles America's founding principles by inspiring young people to understand and appreciate our Founders' noble ideals, sacred honor, and ultimate sacrifices ~ thus compelling a new generation to uphold these standards in all aspects of their lives.*

I. Introduction

Project American Life (P.A.L.) is a highly innovative, four-day, hands-on program for students in grades five through eight. The program is built upon the principles of The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution. For over a decade, *P.A.L.* has been dynamically inculcating the founding principles of, and the civic duties to, America. Students are empowered to discover the “4 C’s” of the curriculum: Clarity, Compassion, Courage, and Commitment. *The Thomas Jefferson Community Center (T.J.C.C.)* is designed to multiply the transformational impact of *P.A.L.* programming through the training of new operators and / or licensees all across the country. *P.A.L.*'s goal is to be serving over 2,000,000 students annually within the next ten years... and thereby restoring American founding principles from the grassroots level ~ from amidst “we the people.”

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), in support of civics education, has stated that students who are committed to the knowledge, skills, and values of our country “will be the most capable of shaping our future and sustaining and improving our democracy.” To accomplish this goal, the *T.J.C.C.* provides training in both the philosophical underpinnings and the pedagogy of *P.A.L.*, as this is the proven instrument for delivering essential core knowledge, inspiring cognitive and moral development, and promoting long-term civic virtue. The comprehensive seminar equips individuals and / or organizations with the tools for successfully delivering all facets of the *P.A.L.* program.

Using its trademarked curriculum, highly trained staff, and specialized audio-visual resources, the *T.J.C.C.* will empower educators, entrepreneurs, and camp owners across the country. The *T.J.C.C.* will train the entire staff of new operators as well as host introductory colloquiums for a wide assortment of professionals that are dedicated to restoring American Exceptionalism.

II. “Self-evident” Crisis

A Presidential task force has been formed to explore how best to encourage states to adopt civics education standards. With 81 % of our country's elite college seniors making a D or an F on a simple American history test (American Council of Trustees and Alumni), we are compelled to halt the deterioration of fact-based information about our American Heritage. Moreover, the lack of core knowledge regarding America's founding principles, and the parallel lack of civic virtue is becoming “self-evident” ~ particularly among our youngest citizens.

One need only visit a shopping mall to observe all manner of appalling behavior that was highly uncommon, and even unknown, until recent years. Moreover, there is abundant statistical evidence of America's intellectual and moral decline, as revealed in test scores, criminal activity, polling analysis, and market research. As citizens we have a choice: We can put our heads in the sand, or merely prepare for collapse. Or, we can act swiftly and effectively as we anticipate America's brightest days yet.

III. Goals and Methods

The goals of the *T.J.C.C.* are accomplished by providing *P.A.L.*'s one-of-a-kind intensive training as well as continuous administrative and technical support. Our mission is straightforward and with results that have immediate efficacy. Specific objectives include...

- ...Establishing new *P.A.L.* sites all across the country (up to 50 new operations per year).
- ...Providing the tools that equip teachers to effectively inculcate America's founding principles.
- ...Assisting other organizations in promoting civic literacy and the responsibilities of citizenship.

IV. Program Services and Licensing

The *T.J.C.C.* core staff will interface with potential new sites around the nation offering highly detailed support services. Additionally, the *T.J.C.C.* will provide all materials and templates necessary for start-up operations, including brochures, audio-visuals, program DVDs, and even making trained staff available for pilot weeks. Having completed *T.J.C.C.*'s exhaustive training, new sites will be licensed to operate the *P.A.L.* trademarked program and use its copyrighted curriculum. To meet demand, new staff will be continually trained to meet national staffing requirements, as well as to implement the programming needs of the *T.J.C.C.*

Additionally, the *T.J.C.C.* will offer *P.A.L.*'s highly specialized civics and citizenship training to schools and educators (public and private) as an integral resource in inspiring prerequisite interest, vision, and dedication. These workshops will cater particularly to meet the needs of state boards of education, charter schools, and innovative educators seeking alternatives to the massive federal / state bureaucracies and structural monopolies in educating future generations.

V. Facilities

Land: Through 10 +/- acres of idyllic landscaping will run Jefferson Avenue ending at the Island of Liberty cul-de-sac. Here one finds the American flag at the center, a Thomas Jefferson statue alongside, and visitor information panels around the circumference. This island will provide continuous information regarding the operations of the *T.J.C.C.* as well as a perfect place to take patriotic pictures and to read from America's founding documents.

“Independence Hall” (Training Center): This striking state-of-the-art complex will contain facilities that provide the latest in high-tech, multi-media presentations ~ accommodating 50 people per session. It will also feature breakout classroom spaces and a conference room. Local community groups may reserve these facilities on days when the facilities are not already being used for seminars.

“Entrance Hall” (Jefferson's White House): A favorite showplace for our 3rd President, this small building will serve as the office space for overall *T.J.C.C.* operations. Additionally, in Jeffersonian tradition, it will contain a collection of American curios and historical manuscripts as well as a library featuring literary works that were foundational to the creation, endurance, and preservation of America. The library will be open to the public during business hours,

Landscaping: The beautiful grounds will feature a public walking trail containing picturesque gazebos, a reflecting pond, and “stations of patriotism” along the way (i.e. reflections upon national treasures such as the Jefferson Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, and the National Archives Museum). There will also be a scenic outdoor amphitheatre.

VI. History of *Project American Life*

Jamie Aiken founded a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (*The Refuge*) in 1991. *The Refuge* is best known for its experiential education program *Project American Life*. Aiken secured all initial financing and managed the business operations. The hands-on concept grew from an ambitious idea to the ultimate educational adventure serving thousands of students and special populations annually. Aiken created the operating philosophy and curriculum of *P.A.L.* in 1996 and has since expanded upon it. *Project American Life* has become an essential archetype for inculcating genuine patriotism, the duties of citizenship, and virtuous moral character.

By using innovative hands-on classes, games, and simulations, *P.A.L.* fosters a hunger for factual answers and a passion for doing one's best. *P.A.L.* imparts a deep appreciation for The Founders' wisdom and sacrifice while challenging participants to likewise seize such heroic virtue. The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution are the objective foundations.

Support: *Project American Life* has received attention from local news media (television and radio), newspapers, and notable recognition from U.S. Senators Jeff Sessions and Richard Lugar. Additionally, parents, teachers, and students offer continued support through testimonials, return visits, and financial contributions.

VII. Conclusion

If students are to understand the important ideals of our country as required by national standards, they must desire to preserve these ideals. Textbook information, rote memorization, and / or living history experiences are a transitory, thus less effective, means of accomplishing this goal. Instead, students must learn through active participation, as this is the crux of our Democratic Republic. Truly grasping the principles upon which this country was founded is essential if we, as a nation, are to produce informed citizens and responsible voters capable of ensuring that our rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" are maintained. The NCSS states that, "social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active." *Project American Life* fulfills all of these objectives, as is incontrovertibly apparent throughout its one-of-a-kind curriculum.

VIII. Efficacy

To understand the transformational quality of the *P.A.L.* experience, one need only peruse the testimonials at the website, as the quotes from students, parents and teachers speak loudly:

www.projectamericanlife.com or www.foundingprinciples.com

On the last night of his presidency, Ronald Reagan addressed the nation from the Oval Office: *"We've got to teach history based not on what's in fashion but what's important... If we forget what we did, we won't know who we are. I'm warning of an eradication of the American memory that could result, ultimately, in an erosion of the American spirit. Let's start with some basics: more attention to American history and a greater emphasis on civic ritual."*